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OXFORD
ENGLISH PRIZE ESSAYS.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

Calboys and Browne, Printers, Oxford.

THE OXFORD ENGLISH

PRIZE ESSAYS

VOLUME I

A NEW EDITION BROUGHT DOWN
TO THE PRESENT TIME



OXFORD

D A TALBOYS

1836

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE early productions of men distinguished in public life, who have by the force of successful talent attained unto fame and fortune, have ever awakened anxious curiosity. In submitting the Oxford English Prize Essays to the public, it is conceived that a very generally diffused feeling of the kind will be gratified. The inquiries that have for many years been made after the Essays to which this brief advertisement is prefixed, have induced the publisher to collect the present volumes, which he now offers to the public in the belief that he is adding an elegant and agreeable work to our literature, and without any further introduction than the expression of his grateful thanks to those noblemen and gentlemen who have favoured him with copies of their essays.

The publisher regrets, that although he has spared neither pains nor expense, he has been unable to render the series complete, but when it is remembered how many of the authors are dead, and how many scattered over every part of the world, he considers that he has reason rather to congratulate himself on his success in obtaining so many of the essays, than to regret the

absence of the very few that are wanting. It remains to make some apology for the absence of a strict chronological order in the arrangement of the Essays. This is the case only in the two first volumes, and was occasioned by some of the earlier Essays having been procured after more recent, and, therefore, more accessible ones had been printed off. This inconvenience, however has been remedied as far as possible by the chronological list prefixed to the first volume, which will also serve as a table of contents to the whole work.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

This second edition contains, besides the Essays which have been successful since the publication of the former one, several of the earlier prizes which the publisher could not before obtain.

November, 1836.

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OXFORD

ENGLISH PRIZE ESSAYS.

ON THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TRAVELLING INTO FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

THE importance of education has produced those numerous systems, which have been framed for conducting it: nor is it to be wondered at, that many have prosecuted an inquiry, in which all were interested. We see theories, which some have embraced as judicious and complete, exploded by others as erroneous or defective; and plans at present deemed ill-concerted or impracticable, which it was once thought reasonable to adopt. Where the consequences of a measure are momentous, the propriety of it will be previously discussed. The tendency then of every proceeding in the management of education has been attentively weighed, and because no topic of this sort was frivolous, every consideration be-

came the subject of debate. Conviction, however, is seldom the result of controversy; and questions may be frequently handled without determination. Of those which relate to the improvement of the understanding and the heart, few have been more thoroughly sifted, and few remain more remote from decision, than that which has been agitated concerning the utility of foreign travel; the good effects of which have been maintained on one hand with a degree of confidence which may seem to betray an unnatural disrelish of domestic acquisitions, and controverted on the other with a degree of warmth proceeding from an ignorance of the real value of foreign attainments.

To justify the former opinion, the plan of domestic education has been reduced by exaggerated details of its imperfections, and depreciating estimates of its excellences; both which have been viewed through mediums equally fallacious, though differing in their effects. Hence it has been proposed to supply by travel, wants which have never been felt, to rectify errors the existence of which is disputable: and we have been taught to explore foreign countries for accomplishments which may be more readily acquired at home. Perhaps these were recommendations which the cause did not require. The advantages of the practice are sufficiently numerous without exaggeration; and when arguments had

been drawn from our real defects, it was superfluous to deduce proofs from imaginary failings.

If the benefits have been thus injudiciously heightened by the advocates for foreign education, they have, on the other hand, been unreasonably reduced; and the enemies of travel, appealing to facts for the support of their own sentiments, have exhibited the opinions of their adversaries, as unwarranted by the sober testimony of experience. But the proofs which are adduced to support this assertion are rather to be considered as plausible, than admitted as conclusive, unless the same reasoning by which ill-conducted travel is rejected, may be employed against travel itself.

The first stage of national existence, like that of individuals, is a state of ignorance and imbecility; and the history of a people at this period, forming either a tedious narrative of trifling occurrences, or a recital of barbarous transactions, is perused with indifference, or disgust. But our curiosity is never more awakened, than when we proceed to investigate the causes, and trace out the progress of their improvement. It is evident, that the skill of an infant people would be insufficient for constructing the complicated engine of government; that they would be unable to contrive or adjust the various parts of so intricate a machine with that nicety which would be required to facilitate its movements. To form

a system of police they must be acquainted with preceding establishments, and must ascertain the excellences of every civil institution by viewing each subsisting mode of government in its effects. The political architect would then proceed to unite the perfections of every admired model in the plan of the intended fabric, and would be content to copy, because he would find himself ill-qualified to invent.

From these observations we may collect the motives upon which the celebrated travels of the ancient lawgivers were undertaken. Being yet unable to survey the policy of a distant people in the literary picture, they were compelled to view the original, and were constrained to have recourse to travel, when it was the only means of communication which was adequate to the purposes of acquiring improvement. The slow advances of civil knowledge in those countries, where the means of access to others were unknown, will further evince the truth of these remarks. A peculiar infelicity of this sort prolonged the reign of ignorance and barbarism in our own island, and ages lapsed before art had taught us to surmount the difficulties of our situation. While we were thus unable to visit other regions, our own shores were approached but to satisfy the cravings of interest, or the ambition of dominion. The Asiatic trader impoverished, without improving us; and the Roman general

extended his conquests, without a wish to civilize the conquered.

But the usages of antiquity can give no sanction to modern customs, nor can we deduce the expediency of a practice in an enlightened period, from the frequency or propriety of it in an era when the circle of knowledge was more contracted. When the channels of science were not freely opened, access was sought to the fountain; but it became unnecessary to repair to the source, when the stream was suffered to diffuse itself. In estimating the benefit of modern travel, therefore, we must compute our present wants, and the proposed methods of relief: nor must we hastily infer the superior excellence of this method of attaining knowledge from the examples of those ages which knew no other means of acquiring it.

When by the improvement of advancing experience, our civil constitution has at length well nigh reached the summit of attainable excellence, we can have little to adopt from foreign policy, nor need we wish to improve a system, which has already become almost perfect. But since it is by comparison alone that we can judge of our greatness, we must determine the powers of foreign nations, before we can rate the strength of our own. A knowledge of foreign constitutions, therefore, is still necessary to finish the political character: but we need not be sent

abroad to exercise a study, which has been long and successfully cultivated at home. The modern statesman may investigate the nature and power of every government in his closet; he may view their local advantages delineated in his map, and gather their mutual dependence from the mature observations of preceding travellers.

The insufficiency of reading for these ends has indeed been largely insisted upon, whilst the representations of travellers have been exposed as replete with falsehood or inconsistency. But if the fancy has wantoned in the description of a happy valley, or a favourite stream, and being anxious to draw a beautiful picture, has formed it without resemblance, we shall seldom detect it straying in the dull range of politics, or warm in the recital of civil institutions. Here disquisition is cool, and the reformation of more trivial errors would be no equivalent for the dangers of a foreign journey, were there not other advantages weighty enough to render it a sufficient recompense.

The weakness of human nature is particularly discovered in its tendency to extremes. We pursue virtue itself with that impetuous ardour, which often hurries us beyond the line of duty. There are few principles of action which have been more immediately beneficial to society, and which therefore merit more assiduous cultivation, than the love of our country. But whilst we

have been studious to regard our parent with the tenderness of filial affection, we have imbibed the weak prejudices of children, and, like the undiscerning lover, have fondly gazed without discrimination upon her beauties and her deformities.

He who overrates his own merits will probably undervalue the deserts of others. From this arrogant conceit of our worth as a people has sprung that uncharitable opinion, which confines excellence to the boundaries of a small island, and with the true spirit of ancient Greece and Italy, has adjudged every other people to be comparatively barbarous. This illiberal idea, it is confessed, has been attended with salutary consequences: it has roused the soul of the warrior, and by teaching the personal defenders of our country to despise, it has taught them to conquer her enemies.

But it may be discovered without any extraordinary acuteness of reasoning, that this opinion, which has been ratified by popular assent, because it indulged our national pride, has found its chief support in the confidence of those who embrace it. We are indebted to foreign ingenuity for the first essays in the arts of elegance: and whilst we are justly celebrated for our improvements of imparted discoveries, we must acknowledge the unfruitfulness of English invention. He who examines the origin of our political government, the favourite theme of our

justest commendations, will find that this beautiful system was invented in the woods of a foreign country^a.

It is in vain, however, that we attempt to eradicate so stubborn a prepossession, unless what is thus suggested by reflection, be confirmed by the evidence of our senses.

If the discovery of defects be the first step towards amendment, he must despair of correcting a fault who is situated where he cannot perceive it. Our prejudices form a part of those national failings, which are seldom acknowledged among ourselves, and we have a powerful argument for the necessity of travelling when we consider it as the only means whereby these weaknesses can be effectually detected.

What has here been advanced concerning more venial infirmities may perhaps with equal justice be applied even to some vices which may seem to be the production of our climate. Example, which is generally deemed a satisfactory plea for foibles, has sometimes screened iniquity itself under the softer title of a weakness. But as the fear of appearing singular, which prevails universally, has everywhere given it its efficacy, if we have complied with the vices of our own country in obedience to its general customs, we may be taught to abstain from them in another

^a Ce beau système a été trouvé dans les bois. Montesquieu.

by the same submissive deference to established but contrary practices.

The acquisition of foreign languages, which has usually been pleaded to countenance the custom of travel, cannot with justice be denied to possess singular utility. But, whilst we would recommend this study, we cannot but disapprove that ill-directed labour, which, with little regard to the import of expressions, is employed in attempts to acquire the niceties of foreign pronunciation. This censure, however, must not be extended to the traveller, who, proposing to himself the conversation of eminent men abroad, as a principal object of his undertaking, must endeavour to adorn his discourse with all the graces of utterance. Broken language will render his inquiries really obscure, and seemingly impertinent. And as the accuracies of foreign diction can only be taught in a foreign country, we are furnished with another proof of the utility of travel.

Amidst a variety of objects which will challenge the attention of the traveller, few will prove more copious sources of delight, or supply him with ampler matter for useful reflection, than those awful monuments of ancient industry and power, which seem to have been hitherto preserved as memorials of a destructive luxury, the havoc of which was felt when the shocks of time were yet imperceptible. How must the British

statesman feel for his country, when he surveys the venerable ruins of a senate, which stood secure till gold was accepted as an equivalent for freedom, and the Roman legislature, softened by pleasure, embraced the shackles of slavery? Whilst the eye is ravished, the mind cannot be unemployed, but recurs to the virtues which established, and the vices which overthrew the grandeur it surveys.

When we consider the profuse rewards bestowed upon foreign artists, by those who pretend to a more refined taste, we may recommend travel to our countrymen as a means of improvement in those performances which derive their excellence from the delicacy of manual execution. The painter must view pictures, and the sculptor must copy statues. If Italy is confessedly the seat of the finer arts, when we have sought instruction from her, we may aspire to hope, that the time will come when English ingenuity, as well as foreign skill, shall be loaded with the rewards of English liberality.

These are some of the advantages which may accrue from travel, when the understanding has been previously fraught with useful knowledge, and the judgment is mature: those which are generally enumerated to enforce the necessity of early travel, prove it to be the real source of all those fatal miscarriages which have induced the

more serious parts of mankind to give a total discountenance to the practice.

Considered in a political view, it is pregnant with mischiefs. He who reflects that the laws and manners ought mutually to operate upon each other, can never approve a scheme of education which forms the manners without relation to the laws. Fashionable as it may be to complain of the roughness of British demeanour, the wary politician would use the file with caution, and leave those manners coarse, which, by attempting to polish, he might weaken or impair. Where the constitution calls upon every man to assert his own independence, and has appointed each the guardian of his own freedom, few have leisure or inclination to pursue those refinements which necessarily engage the attention of a more enslaved people. He who has not a single right to protect, may endeavour to render his servitude supportable by studying the arts of politeness: but let not the Briton be taught to leave his distinguishing privilege—his liberty, without defence, whilst he affects these elegant improvements.

Some, influenced by reflections drawn from the ductility of youth, have recommended early travel for the more easy removal of national prejudices, not yet grown obstinate by duration. But perhaps experience has uniformly proved, that by an early expulsion of prepossessions in

favour of our own country, we form an opening for the admission of opinions detrimental to it, that our prejudices are rather exchanged than destroyed. To this only can we attribute a prevailing passion for foreign productions, which, as it deprives our own artists of the rewards their industry claims, and withholds from our manufacturer every encouragement which can animate his labours, must at length exclude all expectation of domestic improvement.

Serious as these evils are, they are not the most dreadful consequences of early travel. Introduced into a depraved world, when his reason is yet too feeble to counteract the workings of his passions, the young traveller lies open to seduction, is deceived by every fashionable error, and misled by every delusive example. He probably returns to his own country a compound of ignorance and infidelity, with little to atone for laxity of principle, but the fopperies of a trifling and superficial elegance.

If there be a people among whom this practice has generally obtained, we shall find them generally corrupted. Perhaps the frequency of it among ourselves may account for the alarming depravity of our manners, which every honest man sees and laments.

Where then shall we seek a remedy? must it not be in that education which watches over the

morals with the strictest vigilance, and by fortifying the mind with the soundest principles of religion, enables it to pursue with safety those inferior accomplishments whose only merit is to heighten the beauty of virtue, and which become truly dangerous when they soften the deformities of vice.

JOHN SCOTT,

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE.

1771.

ON SCULPTURE.

DÆDALA SIGNA POLIRE.

THE imitative arts, collectively considered, have been the subject of much and very abstracted speculation; in which both the nature of their connection with the human mind, and the various modes of their operations on it, have been analyzed with accuracy and penetration. A truly elegant and classical writer of the present age has prosecuted his inquiry on this point with that judicious refinement and perspicuity, long esteemed his invariable and almost peculiar characteristic. Such a disquisition, however, as being too comprehensive, and not applicable to that art, solely and individually considered, of which we now treat, may, perhaps not unjustly, be deemed rather foreign to our purpose. It will probably be sufficient, if taking up the art in its most infant state, we pursue it through each successive stage of improvement, decline, or revival, mark their different eras, and endeavour to develop their secret springs and causes.

Whether Sculpture was in its first origin the mere fortuitous result of that imitative propensity ever active in the human mind, or whether it was intentionally and professedly devised with a view to any determinate end, is a very dark and disputable point. Whichever was the case, this at least is certain, that a more particular knowledge of its use and application quickly succeeded its invention. The circumscribed capacity of early unenlightened ages, not easily admitting pure and abstracted conceptions, made sensible representations first necessary to fix and concentrate their ideas. A supreme spiritual invisible intelligence being infinitely beyond the reach of vulgar apprehension, was under the necessity of being shadowed out to their senses through the medium of some more obvious and familiar imagery. The attributes of this intelligence, power, justice, mercy, or goodness, distinctly considered, were separately personified, and converted into objects of sense. The various passions and affections of humanity, joy, sorrow, love, hatred, fear, and revenge, were in like manner embodied and clothed with material shape and form. To this it may be added, that the first civilizers of mankind, or inventors of useful arts, were in that rude state of nature beheld with a distant reverence, nearly allied to adoration. The advantages resulting to society by their discoveries and institutions seemed so perfectly consonant to the

idea of a superior existence, that the grateful simplicity of their admirers readily subscribed to their deification. This system, then, of mythology, this state of polytheism, were, as it seems, more particularly favourable to the introduction of sculptors and painters, whose works alone could furnish sensible representations, and thus determine the object of devotion. The want, perhaps, of their earlier assistance had before that time directed the indiscriminate worship of mankind, not only to animals, but to inanimate substances, and even rude unorganized matter. Dædalus, by the concurrent evidence of history, after the deluge had involved in one indiscriminate ruin all arts, whether elegant or useful, however imperfect, or however improved, first attempted their revival. His achievements, now thickly veiled in a mist of fable and antiquity, seem marvellous and incredible, as distant objects, when beheld through any dense medium, will generally assume an extravagant and unnatural magnitude; but though part of the excessive admiration he acquired might probably originate in the fond ignorance of his admirers, he must still, in the strictest justice, be esteemed the founder of the Athenian school. Till his appearance, the Grecian statues, formed on the Egyptian model, were mere shapeless stocks, their eyes closed, their arms hanging down as if glued to the body, and their feet joined, without

life, attitude, or gesture. Dædalus gave them eyes, hands, and feet; and into these stiff motionless trunks infused some spark of life and animation. From these feeble beginnings his disciples, gradually improving, slowly acquired some superior degree of excellence. The exact progress, however, of this art can be but indistinctly traced from its first dawnings, till that period when it at last shone out in meridian splendour. When Phidias, Scopas, Lysippus, and Praxiteles, with a multitude of lesser names, descending from their great father and founder in a kind of illustrious filiation, added dignity, elegance, and character, it was now no longer the indiscriminate admiration of a rude age, where novelty alone might constitute merit, but the judicious and deliberate approbation of a refined and learned people, accustomed to the great and beautiful, and who, though enthusiastic in their admiration, were still critically chaste in their previous judgment. These great masters, with a daring flight peculiar to elevated genius, struck out of the beaten track; judging that nature rarely centred perfection in any individual object, they framed an ideal beauty of their own. By a happy analysis resolving grace and dignity into their first principles, they judiciously selected those component parts best adapted to form a complete whole, a perfect idea. Thus, by a delicate combination, drawing to a single point the scattered

excellences of nature, they embodied their sublime conceptions in those noble works, of which some few still subsist, as matchless patterns of the most exquisite symmetry, elegance, and grandeur. Though time has robbed us of too many proofs of their indescribable excellence, it has not diminished the force of those that remain. With what ideas are we instantaneously struck by the mingled grace and dignity, the divine expression of the Apollo Belvidere! With what rapturous sensations are we even at this day affected by the delicate grace and unaffected simplicity of the Medicean Venus! by the exact proportions and energetic simplicity of the Niobe or Laocoon! Among the various causes of this acknowledged perfection, the following may perhaps claim no inconsiderable rank. In those ages, simplicity of manners co-operating with a happy temperature of air, rendered superfluous much of that heavy drapery, those voluminous folds, with which the inhabitants of more northern skies are by necessity encumbered. The Grecian artist studied nature in her most full and free exertions, in her most varied forms and attitudes. The youth, by frequent preparation of their bodies with bathing and unction, and perpetually engaged in gymnastic exercises, acquired that active play of the limbs, that pliability and elasticity of the joints, which must have rendered the most complete models of manly grace and

symmetry; while the virgins in their dances, and other rural amusements, so warmly coloured by the old poets, artlessly discovered those unstudied charms, that native unconscious elegance and ease, which the skilful hand of the painter, or sculptor, readily transferred to a Helen or Venus.

Other causes may, perhaps, be assigned for the very flourishing state of the arts at that particular period. How far moral and physical causes operate on the genius of an age, has been a subject of inquiry frequently discussed from the days of Velleius Paterculus to our own. Certain it is, that at particular revolutions of time, some kind of supernatural influence, or, as it were, some celestial emanation, seems to descend on a particular people, lights up their invention, heightens and spiritualizes their imagination, and calls into life and action their dormant faculties. Genius will ever demand a friendly soil to flourish and dilate itself, while, like the sensitive plant, it ever shrinks and sickens at the rude touch of tyranny and oppression. Phidias, who stands first in this illustrious line of artists, fortunately arose at a juncture well calculated for a display of his admirable abilities. Greece now began for a while, to respire, after a dreadful series of domestic troubles and foreign devastations. Pericles, who at this time had the sole guidance of the republic, to his consummate knowledge as a statesman, united, as a man of

letters, the most unbounded attachment to the liberal arts. Comprehending in his more solid cares for the public weal, a subordinate view to its splendour and magnificence, he studied by the grandeur of its ornaments to render Athens worthy of the appellation it afterwards received, the Eye of Greece; whilst the various artists he employed, conscious that without his powerful call they might long have languished in obscurity, seemed to vie with each other in the most ample exertion of their talents. The successors of Phidias, Lysippus, and Praxiteles, were ushered into fame and distinction by a concurrence of circumstances equally fortunate.

The career of the barbarians had been effectually checked by Philip and Alexander; nor were the civil wars of the petty states of a nature sensibly to retard the progress of the arts. The Abbé du Bos nicely distinguishes between those wars which, affecting the liberty or property of a people, must necessarily, by their grievous consequences, entail destruction on the arts, and those struggles for a nominal conquest, where the law of nations being closely kept in sight, the arts are little or not materially concerned. Both Philip and his son, by their rapid and extensive conquests, had gained new and distant worlds, interested the passions, warmed and elevated the imagination, of their countrymen. On any suspension of war, men of genius were warmly

patronized and caressed in a splendid and magnificent court, where Asiatic spoils began already to introduce a refined and elegant luxury. The same combination of causes that produced a Lysippus, or a Praxiteles, produced also a Demosthenes, a Xenophon, a Thucydides, a Sophocles, and a Theocritus. Poetry, painting, and sculpture, with every other liberal art, at this auspicious era enjoyed one common prosperity, while the productions of each served as mirrors reciprocally to reflect the merit of its sister professions. Now it was that art and genius, by their respective performances, held up virtue and merit in the most conspicuous point of view, gave the great and good to live beyond a mortal date, and peopled the cities of Greece with heroes and demigods. By a custom that afforded the most salutary encouragement to every virtue, either public or private, the most eminent works of art were in their annual games and solemnities exposed to the eyes of all Greece, and censured or approved by universal suffrage; they were afterwards conspicuously placed in porticos or temples, where they formed at once a noble spectacle, and a perpetual spur to public virtue. Every, even the meanest, individual was interested, and on beholding the consecrated statues of his countrymen and ancestors, must feel his heart expand at the inspiring recollection, that by equal desert he might ensure to himself an equal immortality.

We turn with regret from a view so flattering to humanity, and stretching our eye a little onwards perceive a mist of ignorance and barbarism overclouding the prospect. Under the successors of Alexander the empire became, as it were, disjointed; and by the decline of liberty and national virtue, the natural bond and cement of the arts was imperceptibly dissolved. The public spirit of the Greeks was now gradually transformed into selfish cunning, their wit and learning into trick and fraud, and their greatness of soul melted down to the most abject degree of Asiatic servility. The baneful influence of this fatal degeneracy was universal, and had so destructively pervaded the moral and political system, that, totally unmanned by their vices, the measure of their ruin was at length easily completed in the defeat of Perseus, when the exiled arts, gladly following the standard of the conqueror, gained a new establishment in Italy. Rome for the first five centuries after her foundation, actuated solely by a martial enthusiasm, and intent on the acquisition of a more extended territory, studied no ornaments but trophies and triumphal decorations. Even these wore the savage complexion of the times, and consisted only of a rough-hewn post, on which hung the bloody spoils of the enemy. But about the time of the second Punic war, Marcellus, by the conquest of Syracuse, a city richly adorned with every work of art, opened

a precious mine of Grecian elegances. Scipio, Paulus Æmilius, and Mummius, by their respective victories, added whatever was rare or beautiful in Asia, Macedon, or Corinth. These quick importations gradually introduced an acquired taste which ripened at last into an insatiable avidity, that ransacked the most distant provinces and kingdoms for the relics of antiquity. Their own productions, however, were yet so few and inconsiderable, that by the evidence of contemporary historians they adopted the old Greek or Etruscan statues to perpetuate their own national and domestic occurrences. As an incontestible proof of this, we read that Clodius, after the banishment of Cicero, on the ruins of his palace, dedicated to Liberty a statue, which in its original state had represented a Bœotian courtesan. But on the accession of Augustus to the imperial throne, the arts took daily deeper root, and the ingenious artificers of Greece were warmly invited from all quarters. That great prince, by a well-placed liberality, fixed in his court a brilliant constellation of wits and learned men, too dear and familiar to every classical reader to require an enumeration. A Cicero at Rome, and a noble bust of Agrippa, still preserved at Florence, show to what perfection sculpture had then arrived, while architecture received at the same time its most finished improvements under Vitruvius. Nerva, Trajan, and

the Antonines, in some measure recovered the arts from that violent shock they had sustained by a succession of bad and ignorant emperors after Augustus. That precious monument, Trajan's pillar, the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, and the bust of Caracalla, are generally esteemed the last efforts and expiring struggles of Roman sculpture. Its descent was afterwards so rapid, that in the reign of Constantine, on the erection of his triumphal arch, the workmen, from their incapacity to supply suitable ornaments, stripped Trajan's pillar, and by a most unnatural misapplication transferred to the arch many of those figures, whose merit was merely local and appropriated. We are told by authors of the fourth century, that there were then to be seen in Rome as many statues as inhabitants: a very sufficient and obvious reason that so few should now remain, is suggested by the recollection of those merciless persecutions they suffered from the bigotry of the Iconoclasts, who, under the specious pretext of abolishing all possible objects of idolatrous worship, indiscriminately broke or defaced every statue or picture, the most valuable or admired. From the incursion of the northern ravagers, all Europe, for many centuries, appears to have become one vast theatre of war and confusion. The history of these tempestuous times presents little to our view but a tragical scene of poisonings and assassinations, of murdered popes

and emperors. The arts, comprehended in the general wreck, for ages lay buried in the ruins of learning and civilization.

After this long and dark night, Sculpture, roused by the awakening call of Leo, began again to rear her head, and once more counted in her train of votaries some inconsiderable names. Vassari, indeed, in the proem to his valuable work, has rescued from oblivion some more early sculptures, whose merit, from our general attachment to the age of Leo, is often entirely, though unjustly, disregarded; but all, like lesser stars, vanish and fade away before the transcendent beauties of a Michael Angelo. To this great master have all succeeding ages looked up as the genuine archetype of excellence, viewing with a distant and submissive veneration those noble works, which by their sublime mixture of elegance, character, and expression, seem to have borrowed almost a Grecian perfection. One common gloom of ignorance and barbarism overshadowed at this time both France and England. Their architecture was Gothic, their painting confined to glass, and their attempts in sculpture to a degree rude and imperfect. Francis, indeed, who in his visits to Italy had imbibed the principles of a more sound and cultivated taste, while he personally encouraged and employed both Rafaelli and M. Angelo, was by his agents at Florence forming a collection that comprised

not only antiques, but the works of the most celebrated moderns. Primatticcio and Vignola, commissioned by him, had moulded at Rome the Venus, Laocoon, and Cleopatra, and other famous remains of ancient skill. France thus receiving the art almost in a state of maturity, and being assisted by such an ample variety of the most excellent models, we are less surprised that, within a century and a half, the French sculpture should have attained so eminent a rank. The reign not unfrequently styled the age of Lewis the fourteenth, is by historians of that nation imagined and painted as one of those uncommon efforts of nature, which gives birth to its most rare and distinguished productions. That great monarch saw labouring for his immortality, in conjunction with Poussin and Le Brun, a Bernini, whom, by a most princely donation, he had invited from Rome, and a Gerardon, a native and most brilliant ornament of his own kingdom. France will for ever boast with pride and rapture the baths of Apollo, and tomb of Richelieu, those works of this her favourite son, which have placed her sons but one degree below the most daring flights of ancient Greece. Puget immortalized himself by his masterly bust of Milo. Theoden and Le Gros have, even in Italy, the seat of the arts, left such invaluable monuments of their excellence, as will not only for ages blazon to the world their universal merit but

clearly prove they were not dragged into fame by a mere national predilection. This observation will more forcibly strike us, when we recollect, that in the beginning of that very age, Italy possessed her own Algerdi, whose truth of composition, and greatness of design in his altarpiece of St. Peter's church, has justly secured him an immortal name.

In the last century, Jones and Wren, those great reformers of the English taste, first modernized our architecture, and taught us how dependent grace and beauty ever are on order and proportion. Contemporaries with them we behold Gibbons and Cibber rising above a crowd of inferior competitors. Many and eminent works of the first still remain, while the last, by his masterly execution of his figures of madness, will for ever reflect honour on the British school. Rysbrach, Schemaker, and Roubillac, whom we may certainly be allowed to look upon as our adopted children, have since that time been evidences at least of our passion, if not our taste, for the art. But now let our own and genuine offspring, a Bacon, or a Wilton, so worthily assert our national pretensions. Surely no attachment to a foreign school can justify an impolitic inattention to our own. The successful efforts of the French and Italian academies have at last experimentally demonstrated to us the beneficial tendency of such institutions, while the royal

munificence in our late establishment has fully enabled us to confute those insufficient speculatists, who in their partial theories have presumptuously branded us with a national incapacity for the elegant manual arts. We shall now no longer behold the genius of the sculptor chained down to monuments and sepulchral decorations, while English history presents so fair a scene, and national merit offers so many and such worthy subjects of his skill. These, at the same time that they fitly grace our cities and public edifices, will to every intelligent mind open a source of the most pleasing contemplation. Is there, can there be, an Englishman, but must with an enthusiastic exultation trace the skill of a fellow-citizen thus honourably embodied in the figure of a Locke or a Newton, of a Hardwicke or a Wolfe? Thus, while we cherish the rising art, let us, by directing his skill within its proper channel, render the artist an advantage as well as an ornament to his country. On this principle did the polite legislators of ancient times ever study to make the arts subservient to public virtue and morality. They rightly judged, that the sparks of a generous and useful emulation were naturally warmed into action by honorary memorials of deceased merit, or animated representations of successful heroism. Thus was every meaner sentiment secluded; no little, no unworthy passion, could find room in a soul pre-

occupied by this thirst of noble distinction. Thus did the heroes of former days renew their life in their descendants; and thus were cowards and voluptuaries shamed into courage and activity. By this powerful enchantment on the minds of posterity did the images of Harmodius and Aristogiton stand as the perpetual champions of Athens, and for ages kept alive the holy flame of liberty. National pride may in this point of view be termed the foster-mother of national virtue. The ancients, thus nursed in a perpetual contemplation of great and glorious objects, with these testimonies of a nation's gratitude before their eyes, instinctively caught the pious zeal of their forefathers, and prodigal of life esteemed their blood and fortune cheaply bartered for the welfare of their country. To spirits actuated by this glorious enthusiasm, every sculptured ruin became an animated monitor, every trophy, every column struck their eye with a sacred fascination; while their marble ancestors seemed starting into life, and beckoning them on to fame and immortality. By these perpetual remembrancers they were made sensible that ancestral honours are not an inheritance to be enjoyed in indolence and inactivity. Hence may we trace the latent seeds of that nobly-emulous spirit which stimulated every rising generation to contest the palm with their illustrious progenitors. From this source flowed the manly tears of a rival Alexander over

the tomb of Achilles. Nor was this beneficial influence confined solely to the active and exalted virtues : its operation was also extended over the paths of civil merit, and even shed a softened lustre on every tender charity and affection of social life. The ancients held in equal estimation the memory of those worthies who had lived for their country, and the memory of those heroes who had died for their country. Thus in their courts of justice, the statues of a Solon or Lycurgus stood as lively memorials of a nation's reverence, and showed that great and wise legislators are held but second from the gods ; while the scrutinizing eye and stern regard of a Draco or Zaleucus, whose marble brows breathed an awful severity, terrified the irresolute judge from any iniquitous reversion of the laws. Thus did every street, every portico, or public walk, present some memorial of departed merit, some striking lesson of useful instruction. Next, perhaps, to Codrus or Timoleon might stand the thundering Demosthenes or the subtle Aristotle ; here Homer, and there Thales, or some other founder of a distinguished sect. The history of Greece might be studied in the street, as well as in the closet : the very ornaments of their houses were pregnant with utility, and while they entertained the eye, informed the judgment, and transmitted shining examples to the latest posterity. So prevalent and uniform were the effects

expected from these sculptured monitors among the Romans, that their satirists and orators instanced the frequent neglect of them as a mark of aggravated degeneracy. Their bold figures, and glowing descriptions, represented the venerable statues as animated with shame and anger at the corruption of their race, painted them as domestic and ever present accusers. With a stern and indignant silence they conjured them by those precious monuments no longer to let their excesses tarnish their hereditary honours, or wound the peace of those illustrious shades, by whose sufferings and virtue those honours were purchased and acquired. Such great advantages did the ancients both expect and derive from a well-directed exercise of sculpture; nor have we reason even in these days to suspect that its operation should vary, or its influence on the genius of a people be sensibly diminished.

Britain has ever warmly and abundantly discharged the debt of gratitude to her deceased benefactors; but let her now go farther: she should begin to reap, in the certain encouragement of public virtue, the fruits of that laborious perfection, to which her patient ingenuity has raised the arts.

Now let the painter, or sculptor, do that justice to living merit, which we too frequently leave to be done by posterity, in a tardy and posthumous fame; let us tell the deserving, while

they can enjoy the pleasing incense, that to be great and good, is to be revered and beloved; and that to ornament the shrine of public virtue is a grateful nation's first and nearest care.

JOHN GRATTAN.

1775.

ON ARCHITECTURE.

THE arts in general, respecting human life, are justly distinguished from one another, as they contribute to its necessities, or its ornament. The first of these claim a preference to the latter, founded on intrinsic value, and may be considered as the remote source of their existence. Those inquiries therefore may be esteemed instructive, as well as entertaining, which, by tracing them severally from their first common origin, and following them in their gradual progress towards perfection, at once display the inventive genius of our earliest ancestors, and the laudable emulation and thirst of improvement excited in their posterity.

Considered in this view, the different stages of each art afford a lively picture of the successive gradations of man, from a state of nature, savage and uncultivated, to the latter refinements of politeness and civilization. Nor indeed has anything been esteemed a more certain criterion of the civilized state of particular nations with respect to each other, in every age, than the differ-

ent degrees of attention and encouragement bestowed on the liberal arts.

When we reflect on the immediate causes which gave rise to arts, and especially to the more useful ones, we cannot wonder at the claim of high antiquity, which they have been so universally allowed to possess. On the contrary, we are unable to conceive mankind to have continued long in ignorance of those inventions, the improvements of which we find to be so essentially necessary to our own convenience and comfort. It is to the wants of men, ever urging them to find means for their alleviation, that we may attribute the origin of arts; even of those, which, by the accumulation of splendour they have since received, conceal in some measure the humility and meanness of their birth. Their primitive simplicity was such as might be expected from the nature of their origin: for at first only one end was to be consulted; and utility, being the grand aim of the inventors, was by them solely attended to. It was not till that end appeared to be fully answered, that other motives were suffered to intrude themselves, and the considerations of magnificence and beauty were admitted to have a share with those of convenience. Thus, what was at first calculated barely to supply the wants of mankind, became by degrees subservient to higher purposes, and has added lustre to the most polished nations of the world.

How far these general observations are applicable to the particular art of which we are now to treat, will sufficiently appear on a more minute view of the subject ; which affords an ample field for speculations of this kind, at the same time that it cannot fail of exciting our regard and attention by its great and extensive utility.

Building is generally allowed to have been one of the earliest inventions of men ; as we cannot suppose any other to have had a more immediate reference to their necessary wants. The cultivation of lands is perhaps the only employment of which the antiquity is equally certain and remote. Every society of men, however ancient, appears to have paid attention to it ; and even, at this day, we find those uncivilized people, who are ignorant of most other arts, yet not totally deficient in the simple and necessary principles of constructing houses. Even the savage Indian, who is unskilled in agriculture, and subsists by hunting for his food in woods and deserts, has nevertheless a hut to defend him against the fury of wild beasts, and the inclemencies of the climate which he inhabits.

It seems, therefore, to be true of Architecture, in common with other inventions, that it began with works of mere utility ; and that the first essays in it were characterized by that simplicity and rudeness which universally mark the early efforts of human genius. An ancient cottage,

whose roof, covered with rushes, was supported by the trunks of trees, rough and unhewn from the forest, could not admit of any ornament: whatever merit it might possess, must have been due to its use alone.

To such as are fond of tracing inventions up to their source, these first specimens of architecture may appear curious, and afford matter of much amusement and reflection: but in order to view it as a liberal art, which, by its magnificence, symmetry, and beauty, has a powerful effect on the imagination, and which, by its variety of style, strongly marks the character and manners of different nations; we must pass over its infancy in silence, and take a survey of it from that period, when something more than mere utility began to be consulted.

It has been remarked in the progress of most of the ornamental arts, that greatness of style has been one of their earliest excellences; whereas beauty, being of a more complicated nature, arising from the union of many parts, and the harmony of different qualities combined, required much experience and improvement to bring it to perfection.

This observation is particularly true with respect to architecture. In the more early ages of this art, where we look in vain for examples of beauty, we find a taste for works of greatness exhibited in buildings of such immense bulk as

would exceed our belief, were not some of them still in being, defended by their own vastness against the injuries of time. The Pyramids of Egypt are, in this respect, deservedly ranked among the most curious remains of antiquity; and though they are totally destitute of beauty and elegance, we contemplate them with that astonishment and veneration, which immense objects never fail of producing in the mind of the beholder. If we feel the most delightful sensations on the prospect of a rich country, where the beauties of nature are pleasingly disposed and combined, we are equally, though differently, affected by a scene of huge rocks and precipices, which at once excite in us terror and admiration.

The eastern nations have perhaps exceeded all others in this particular kind of greatness. Their princes, desirous of perpetuating their own memory by the edifices which they raised, seem to have consulted this style alone. The immensity of their building was esteemed their principal excellence; and they were content if these huge monuments, instead of pleasing, might astonish posterity. The temples in this country bore marks of the same prevailing taste. The temple of Jupiter at Thebes, and that of Belus at Babylon, were to every succeeding age the constant objects of wonder and amazement: and the utmost stretch of the imagination is unable to furnish us with an adequate idea of that laby-

rinth, the extent of which covered a whole province. This style of building, introduced in Egypt at so early a period, appears to have preserved its influence in later times, without much variation or improvement; and discovers itself no less in the mosques at Cairo^a, which are calculated by their size to inspire a reverential awe, and open the mind to those vast conceptions, which buildings of more exquisite taste and delicacy seldom produce. For these, indeed, we look in vain among this people. Totally ignorant of the proportions which were afterwards so happily applied to this art, they had no regular order of pillars, nor any other decoration than such as their superstition suggested. They were even unacquainted with the structure of the arch, that most useful and ornamental figure, equally productive of strength and beauty^b. From these circumstances, it is no wonder that the bulk of their buildings should be their chief excellence, and that their grandeur should not consist in the manner of the architecture, but in the solidity and extent of the materials.

Very different is the prospect which ancient Greece presents to our view. It is to this country that we must direct our researches, if we wish to discover the arts in their greatest perfection.

^a See Pocoke's Travels, vol. i. p. 28. 31.

^b Ibid. vol. i. p. 220.

Here it was that statuary, painting, and the other polite ornaments of an accomplished nation first attained a degree of excellence, which the rude attempts of earlier ages never seemed to promise. Nor was architecture less successful in its progress.

We have already seen that the genius of the eastern nations turned towards the gigantic and the marvellous; and was more taken with the enormous size and prodigiousness of a building, than with the graces and nobleness of its proportions. It was from the Greeks that architecture received regularity and order; and it is to them that the art is indebted for all those beauties which it hath hitherto attained. The natural good taste by which Greece seems to have been peculiarly distinguished, nowhere appeared to greater advantage than in their public edifices. By this they were enabled to introduce new proportions and graces, and to apply the assistant arts of sculpture and design towards forming those models which, in their several kinds, have ever been regarded as the standards of perfection.

The three orders of architecture which owe their invention to Greece, are alone sufficient to produce whatever is majestic, elegant, or delicate. To the Doric we are indebted for a grandeur of style far superior to those huge masses, which were before regarded as the greatest examples of

magnificence : and whilst the Corinthian exhibits elegance carried to a great degree of delicacy ; the Ionic, preserving a due mean between both, adds to the elegant an air of the majestic.

It is much to be lamented that Greece, in its present ruinous state, affords so few examples, that remain entire, of its ancient magnificence. Athens itself, once the supreme seat of every thing that was great and beautiful, now discovers little more than a confused heap of ruins : yet among these we may trace the scattered rays of its former glory. The remains of the temple of Theseus may give us some idea of the magnificence which was so nobly displayed in the superb edifice consecrated to the name of Olympian Jupiter ; and the building called the Lantern of Demosthenes, more entirely preserved, is still a pattern of beauty and elegance unparalleled by Greece itself.

But if these ruins of Athens are to be esteemed thus precious, what must have been her splendour in the days of Pericles, when she was arrived at her full maturity, and gave law to the neighbouring nations in arts as well as in arms ! The flourishing state of Greece at this happy period, so richly painted by succeeding historians, is what we can now only contemplate with distant wonder. The abject slavery to which this country was afterwards reduced, totally banished the arts, and forced them to seek

refuge under the successful arms of the Roman conquerors.

To turn our eyes, therefore, from Athens to Rome, is only to view the same correct taste transferred from Greece to Italy. The judicious Romans well knew how to reap the greatest advantage from their conquests, and to enrich their country with the arts as well as the wealth of vanquished nations. The erection of public edifices was an object which their greatest emperors thought no less worthy of their care, than the enlargement of their territories and the regulation of the laws. It was to a prudent imitation of those models which Greece had furnished, that ancient Rome owed her splendour; and, by following those established proportions and orders, the Roman architecture preserved that greatness and beauty of style, which had already attained the summit of perfection.

We must not, however, wholly exclude the Romans from the praise of invention: though the Tuscan and Composite orders, to which Italy gave origin, are rather considered as superfluous, and only depravations of the Doric and Corinthian^c. Yet is Trajan's pillar at this day one of the most noble and entire monuments of Rome; and a singular instance of beauty in the Tuscan column, which was applied with such propriety

^c See *Parallèle de l'Architecture*, etc. par M. Chambray, p. 2.

to immortalize the name and victories of that great emperor. The Composite order has not equal title to praise : it may rather be considered as the first effort of innovation in this art, which has since led to extravagance and confusion.

It is not, therefore, on the merit of invention that Italy ought to build her claim of excellence. The most perfect specimens of architecture which Rome could boast, were but copied from Athens ; and we may esteem their theatres, baths, and triumphal arches, as only representations of that magnificence and beauty, the originals of which are buried in the ruins of Greece. The theatre of Marcellus affords a striking example both of the severe Doric majesty, and of the more graceful beauty of the Ionic order : the Colosseum happily unites the three orders ; and gives us the most perfect idea of the joint effects of greatness, elegance and delicacy. Their religious buildings no less deserve our admiration. To form a just conception of that grandeur of manner which so forcibly affects the mind, we need only contemplate the Pantheon ; a model of this style, to which some of the most approved works of modern architects are greatly indebted for their excellence ; whilst the simplicity and graceful elegance of the temple of Fortuna Virilis are equally pleasing and unrivalled.

It is no wonder that with such examples for their imitation as Greece had afforded, Italy

should have produced a succession of artists, great in their designs, and correct in their taste, beyond those of other nations. The success with which architecture was cultivated in the most flourishing state of Rome, redounds no less to the glory of the emperors who encouraged it, than to have been the patrons of learning and science; and the golden age of Augustus, famed for the birth of Horace and Virgil, may claim equal honour in having produced a Vitruvius.

The architecture of the Romans, having thus attained the utmost height of Grecian purity, happily survived the general corruption which took place under the bad and ignorant emperors who presently followed. The age of Vespasian and Titus furnishes examples which show that this art still retained that eminence to which it had been advanced in the days of Augustus. The emperors Adrian and the Antonines, who succeeded soon after, contributed by their encouragement to keep alive the prevailing taste: and the Mausoleum of the former, some remains of which are now called the Castle of St. Angelo, and others which still subsist in another situation^d, may convince us, that the distinguishing patronage with which he cherished every elegant art, was not the least successful in promoting

^d A great number of beautiful pillars removed from thence by Constantine to the church of St. Paul.

architecture. Under Diocletian we still see some remains of good taste, though weakened and corrupted: and soon after, in the arch of Constantine, view the last faint traces of Roman magnificence. Indeed, so great was the degeneracy of the art at this time, that the architect, unable to furnish an edifice suitable to the occasion, plundered the forum of Trajan; and thus hastily patched up this triumphal monument out of the works of former ages, prematurely and designedly reduced to ruin.

From this period, ancient architecture, which had arrived at the highest degree of perfection under Augustus, and preserved its excellence under many of his later successors, appears very rapidly declining: till at length, at the subversion of the western empire, it shared the fate of the other polite arts, and was overwhelmed in the universal deluge of ignorance and barbarity.

Out of the general confusion which succeeded, when the taste for works of elegance was false and vitiated, arose that style of building called Gothic; no less different from anything which Greece or Rome had invented, than the monkish writers of the fourteenth century from those of the age of Augustus. Italy herself was unable to withstand this total corruption of taste; and was content for the space of many centuries to give up her just title to eminence in this art, and exchange the elegant style, by which she had

been so long distinguished, for the chimerical inventions of a rude and unlettered age.

This depraved state of architecture is evidently seen in the first traces of the art, which we discover among our Saxon ancestors; whose massy fabrics are properly regarded as specimens of the ancient Gothic^e; though custom has now appropriated the name solely to the pointed arch and slender column; which are the peculiar marks of this style in its more modern state, after it had been adopted and improved by the Normans.

Religious buildings, both in Italy and England, afford numerous examples of this improved style; as in these it seems principally to have been employed. An affectation of ornament is its chief characteristic; and its endeavour has been to produce those pleasing effects by extravagant loftiness and lightness of decoration, which arose in the Grecian style from proportion and a just symmetry of parts. Yet, however contemptible Gothic architecture may be thought in comparison of that to which it succeeded, and though it is destitute of that majesty and grace, for which the ancient orders are so deservedly esteemed; the venerable gloom which it casts over the mind, shows it to be not altogether unfit for the uses to which it has been applied: and we

^e See Bentham's Ely Cathedral, p. 36.

must still acknowledge, that one of the most beautiful buildings which our country can boast, is purely of this style, unassisted by the rules of antiquity^f.

Gothic architecture, which had originally succeeded to the Grecian, gave place to it again at the revival of arts in Italy. The age of Leo the tenth is justly celebrated for having dispelled the darkness which had so long obscured Europe, and extinguished that taste for the polite arts, which ancient Italy had so eminently displayed. Rome, which was the scene of some of the most famous works of antiquity, is no less remarkable, for being the place where taste and elegance were first restored, and modern architecture sprung, like a phœnix, from the ashes of the ancient.

The church of St. Peter, built by a succession of artists, whose names would have done honour to ancient Rome, gives us a view of this art again advanced to complete maturity, and willing to dispute the prize with the most daring flights of the ancients. Many circumstances at that time concurred to render this edifice such a finished model of perfection. The munificent patronage of Leo had then kindled every latent spark of genius, and called forth to fame and immortality some of the greatest masters that Italy ever saw. Now it was that the sister arts of painting and

^f King's college chapel, Cambridge.

sculpture contributed to enrich architecture with every embellishment which magnificence could design, or taste execute. What might not be expected from the union of these in the great architect Michael Angelo! the sublimity and boldness of whose genius, exhibited in this majestic building, is crowned with additional beauty by the softer graces and elegance of Raphael.

After such a perfect example of excellence as this superb structure had afforded, the succeeding Italian artists wisely saw, that to imitate antiquity was to attain every thing which grandeur and beauty could effect. Palladio, following the steps of this great father of modern architecture, may be said to have re-established the art, and to have restored it to that purity and perfection, which had scarce been seen since the days of the earlier Roman emperors.

But if we allow Italy the credit of having been the first in restoring architecture, we shall not be thought partial in giving our own country her due share of merit for having adopted the good taste thus introduced and recommended. Inigo Jones, the first who dared to free the English taste from the Gothic barbarity to which it had been so long enslaved, may surely well deserve the praises of that nation, to which he has opened a path unknown before, and led the way in the most useful and ornamental art which can adorn a flourishing country.

From this bold and successful attempt, England may date the origin of every thing in this art which indicates a judicious and correct taste. The rules of Palladio, thus happily adopted, might justly seem to promise whatever her most flattering hopes could suggest; and to disclose the dawn of that future glory, which, under the influence of Wren, should afterwards shine forth with such increase of splendour. If Italy may boast the age of a Leo, and France that of a Lewis, each propitious to the efforts of genius; we have no less reason to look back with pleasure on the reign of a monarch^g, whose acknowledged taste for the polite arts was equalled by the munificence with which he encouraged them. English architecture, thus patronised and directed, produced works little short of those examples of antiquity, which the great architect had proposed to himself as the models for his imitation. The numerous public edifices, which arose in that age from the liberality of a Charles and the skill of a Wren^h, abundantly prove, that the English, though late in receiving the elegant arts, are by no means destitute of that genius and refinement of manners, which are necessary to the encouragement of their growth and cultivation: and that country may justly put in its claim to excel-

^g Charles II.

^h See Wren's *Parentalia*.

lence in taste, which has produced a cathedralⁱ, second to but one in Europe for majesty and grandeur.

Happy would it have been for modern architecture, if the examples of those restorers of the art, who successfully revived the ancient style, had been sufficient to curb the unbounded passion for novelty which has since prevailed. The buildings which Italy has produced during the last century^k appear to have sacrificed symmetry to innovation, and grace and beauty to a profusion of useless ornament. The vanity of Lewis, who offered a reward to him who should invent a new order, at the same time that it roused the emulation of his subjects, contributed not a little to vitiate their taste: and we have seen in this country a Vanbrugh, by aiming to introduce a new style of greatness, become heavy and ungraceful; whilst some of his successors^l have erred on the other side, and, from an attempt at novelty in beauty, and lightness of decoration, are finical and affected. We have lately, however, had a noble imitation of the antique style^m, which has been deservedly applauded and admired; and may hope, under the direction of a Wyatt, to see once more the establishment of this

ⁱ St. Paul's.

^k See Piranesi's Views of Rome.

^l Adams, etc.

^m The Pantheon.

art founded on the just taste and inimitable rules of antiquity.

We have at this time more particular reason to entertain these flattering expectations, when we see every elegant art, under the patronage of royal munificence, rapidly advancing to perfection; and those beneficial institutions encouraged in our own countryⁿ, the utility of which has of late been experimentally demonstrated, by their success in neighbouring kingdoms.

From this general survey of architecture, in the several periods of its perfection, decline, and revival, we cannot but observe the great variety of style which has prevailed at different times and in different nations. If we consider their private buildings in this point of view, we shall see, that propriety and beauty in this art are not absolute but relative qualities, depending in a great measure on the particular circumstances of the people by whom it is exercised.

The natural difference of climates has had a great share in occasioning this variety. The Asiatic, fainting under a burning sun, enjoys with rapture the retirement of a shady pavilion, where artificial fountains conspire with the coolness of the marble walls to allay the intolerable heat. The inhabitant of more inclement skies is only solicitous how he may best shelter himself

ⁿ The Royal Academy.

from the bleak north wind, and defy the piercing attacks of winter. It is on this ground that our great English architect^o condemns the impropriety of which some of his countrymen have been guilty, in admitting colonnades and porticoes into their private buildings; which, though admirably calculated for the climate of Italy, are by no means suited to our own.

It is easy to pursue this observation still farther, and to remark, how far the character and genius of a people show themselves in the particular manner of building which they have adopted. The jealous temper of the eastern nations has dictated to them a style peculiar to themselves. Their houses, difficult of access, with few windows, and those so latticed and blinded as almost to exclude the light^p sufficiently indicate the disposition of the inhabitants: as on the contrary we admire the conscious integrity of the Roman tribune^q, who ordered his architect so to contrive his apartments, that they might be open to the eyes of the whole city.

The modes of worship established in different countries are no less various than the private manners of the people, and are equally observable in their religious edifices. The smallness of the Roman temples readily suggests to us the nature

^o Sir Christopher Wren.

^p See Shaw's Travels, p. 273.

^q See Velleius Paterculus, lib. ii. cap. 14.

of their sacrifices; and the different religion of modern Rome is nowhere more apparently discovered than in the largeness and grandeur of St. Peter's, calculated to display the pomp of ceremonies and magnificence of processions.

This relative propriety, arising from the peculiarities of different nations, may serve farther to show, that however we may esteem architecture as an ornamental art, we shall still fail of giving it the praise which it deserves, unless we consider it as subservient to the most excellent purposes of real convenience, and adding to the charms of beauty the superior merit of utility. Its power in affecting the imagination, which arises either from a greatness and boldness of style, or from a more beautiful and correct symmetry and proportion, justly gives it a distinguished place among the liberal arts. These two manners of building, the great, and the beautiful, are the source of everything which architecture can produce, whether to elevate or please the mind. These, indeed, have their effect, either separately or in union: yet is the consideration of utility, in either instance, necessary, in order to form a complete idea of excellence.

From an apparent deficiency in this essential requisite, some of the greatest works of ancient times have been condemned, as the vain ostentation of luxury and pride. The Pyramids of Egypt, however esteemed, as the most stupen-

dous monuments of the age which produced them, have generally fallen under this censure. But if we examine with attention the evident marks which they bear of having been religious edifices, peculiarly adapted to the mode of worship which prevailed in that country^r; they appear in a more favourable light, and, instead of displaying useless pomp, show ingenuity in the contrivance, and judgment in the execution. Their obelisks, those wonderful efforts of art, are rendered still more curious, on account of the astronomical purposes to which they were applied^s: and the Lantern of Demosthenes, which is in itself so perfect a model of Grecian elegance and delicacy, has received additional beauty from our ingenious countryman, who, with his usual acuteness of observation, has explained the use for which it was designed^t.

Thus contemplating architecture as having utility for its ultimate end, we view with additional pleasure those superb structures of Greece and Rome, in which they have carried the beauties of ornament to such an eminent degree of perfection, without losing sight of this first and most excellent aim. Religion, to which the greatest works which have adorned different

^r See Shaw's Travels, p. 418. 420, and Bryant's Mythology, vol. iii. p. 529, 530.

^s See Bandini de Obeliscis, p. xci.

^t See Stuart's Athens.

countries owe their origin, was probably the first object to which the efforts of architecture, as an ornamental art, were directed. To build temples, which might be in some degree worthy of the deity to whom they were dedicated, has been the constant attempt of every civilized people. This design naturally led them to introduce every decoration which their highest ideas of grandeur and magnificence could suggest. How nobly these ideas were executed, is sufficiently seen in the examples which antiquity has afforded: and while we consider them with pleasure, as works of art, we cannot but applaud the excellence of the motive, which gave origin to such glorious specimens of national devotion and piety.

But when we look back with a degree of reverence on those nations in which this art has appeared in its greatest splendour, uniting propriety with beauty, and use with ornament; we must not suffer ourselves to be so far blinded by their excellence, as to forget our own just title to praise and commendation. The noble purposes to which architecture has been applied in this country, far exceed anything which either Greece or Rome have discovered: and if we yield to them in the art, considered as ornamental, we have no less claim to superiority, from the useful ends to which it has been applied.

Not content with having patronised the noblest monument dedicated to religion which his country

ever saw, our English monarch extended his munificence still farther, and judiciously made his encouragement of art subservient to the most laudable purposes of public charity. The relief of the sick, and the support of the infirm, who, in the earlier part of their lives, had devoted themselves to the service of their country, are objects which do honour to national gratitude and royal liberality^u: and, in these days, the generous temper by which our countrymen are distinguished, nowhere appears more conspicuously than in the numerous public edifices, where the benevolence of the wealthy is humanely contributed towards alleviating the wants of the poor and helpless, oppressed at once with penury, pain, and disease.

Whilst we thus wisely employ the efforts of art, in promoting the noblest designs of public virtue, we need not doubt of meeting with that patronage and assistance, which is never wanting in this country to works of genius, when directed in their proper channel, to the general good of society and mankind.

England has abundantly experienced the beneficial effects of this art, when applied to the encouragement and protection of learning and science. We enjoy here an Athens of our own,

^u Chelsea college, founded by Charles II. and Greenwich hospital, by William and Mary.

which the munificence of our ancestors has founded, and made the nursery of every accomplishment which can adorn a civilized people. The spirit of improving this seat of learning, thus happily established, well deserves all the warmth of applause and favour, with which we have seen it cherished and promoted: and the liberality of a Sheldon and a Radcliffe, judiciously directed to the joint ends of ornament and utility, may induce us to hope, that, as we have already equalled ancient Athens in the pursuits of science and literature, we may in time become no less her rivals in external magnificence and splendour.

THOMAS HENRY LOWTH,
CIVILIAN, AND FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE.

1776.

ON THE AFFINITY BETWEEN PAINTING AND WRITING IN POINT OF COMPOSITION.

UT PICTURA POESIS.—HOR.

FACIES NON OMNIBUS UNA,
NEC DIVERSA TAMEN, QUALEM DECET ESSE SORORUM.—OVID.

THE general resemblance that subsists between the arts is not confined to their operations and effects, but is visible in their very origin. By tracing them to their source, we shall find that they were universally means suggested by necessity for the alleviation of the wants of mankind. The first efforts of this urgent motive display the rudiments of almost every invention, which the refinements of succeeding ages have improved into an ornament of polished life. Vitruvius could discern the principles of architecture in a cottage; and the rude songs and coarse drawings, with which barbarous nations recorded their sports and triumphs, present us with the dawns of those arts, which enlighten the most advanced periods of civil society.

The want of letters, in the early ages, precluded every method of giving a permanent form

to the fluctuating ideas of the mind, but by an immediate address to the senses; and painting^a was the expedient first adopted for the attainment of this end. The moral and religious precepts of the Egyptian sages were conveyed by painted symbols, to which they annexed peculiar ideas; and it was by these natural characters alone that a correspondence could be maintained, or the account of any memorable event be transmitted to posterity. But the explanation of ideas, by emblematical signs, was not peculiar to that sagacious people; it was probably used in the infancy of Greece and Rome: in the former, it was certainly once the same thing to paint as to write, as the language, copious as it was, afforded but one expression for both: in the latter, it is recorded by its own historians, that it was usual for those who had been shipwrecked, to carry with them a painted representation of their misfortunes, as a readier method of exciting compassion, than the most pathetic recital of them. A similar practice prevailed in nations far removed from the imitation of these examples; in Mexico, the important news of an European invasion was transmitted to the emperor by a pictured account of the event; and the History of Peru was preserved by a more simple arrangement of coloured threads.

^a See Junius, de Picturis Vet.

Though the reference of poetry to the wants of mankind does not appear to have been so direct as that of the other arts, yet it has indisputably a high claim to antiquity. Its first descriptions were probably confined to the external beauties of nature, or to such circumstances and events as had been exhibited within its own view^b. But the relation between the senses and the cadence of numbers, and the assistance afforded by the ear to the memory, did not long escape observation; we accordingly find, that at a very early period in history, the most remarkable and interesting occurrences were related in verse, and priests, legislators, and philosophers, adopted poetry as the language of instruction.

In this general survey of the infant state of poetry and painting, they have been represented as the dictates of necessity, or arising from that desire of communicating ideas, which is the characteristic of human nature, and as accommodating themselves merely to the perceptions of sense. But, to view them in a more enlarged and important light, we must hasten to a period when they were considered as liberal arts; as arts which do not confine their application to the senses, but use them only as vehicles of conveying their address to the noblest faculties of the soul. When contemplated in this point of view,

^b See Ferguson, on Civil Society, p. 8.

they will appear so congenial, as to be but different means of obtaining the same end; and it may not be improper to premise, that the analogy between them is not confined to the similarity of their effects in humanizing the manners, and refining the passions, but extends itself likewise to the variety of allusions and illustrations, which they mutually afford and receive from each other.

The maturity at which the arts had arrived in the time of Homer, is fully demonstrated by his works. If in his account of the shield of Achilles, we consider the judgment which he has displayed in the selection of the most suitable objects, and the picturesque manner in which he has disposed and grouped them, we shall pay deference to the conjecture, that he borrowed his ideas from some celebrated paintings, or, at least, that the perfection which the art had then attained, had the power of impressing so forcibly on his readers the scene which he describes. But if he was in any respect indebted to painting, he furnished in return, the richest materials for the pencil. The tears of Portia, on seeing a painted representation of the parting of Hector and Andromache, are a sufficient panegyric on the poet who suggested the subject, and the artist who adopted it. It was from this source, that Zeuxis and Polygnotus imbibed those conceptions, which they embodied in their works; and the greatest compliment that

could have been paid to Apelles was the opinion of Pliny, that his painting of the Sacrifice of Diana, which was considered as his best performance, surpassed even the description of Homer^c. The picturesque imagery, indeed, with which he abounds, most fully entitles him to the appellation bestowed on him by Lucian, of being himself the greatest of painters.

But though the chief, he was by no means the only poet whose beauties were translated into colours. The painters of Greece, conversant in every branch of literature, were convinced that their resources must in a great measure depend on the variety of those ideas, which could only be obtained by a familiar intercourse with their sister art. Hence their minds were enriched by an assemblage of all the treasures, and their works breathed the genuine spirit of poetry. The analogy between the two arts was universally felt and allowed; their rules and principles were in many respects the same; and the same expressions equally characterized the similar and congenial productions of both. The word drama was frequently applied to painting; and the Iphigenia of Timanthes, and Medea of Timomachus fully evinced the force and propriety of the application.

Though the advantages which these arts de-

^c See Pliny, lib. xxxv. cap. 10.

rived from a splendid mythology, which pervaded and animated every object of nature, and every action of mankind, were common to Greece and Rome, it was long before the latter availed herself of them, or aspired to any competition but in the sciences of war and government. The fine arts, particularly poetry and painting, were exotics, which shrunk at the austere manners, and were chilled by the surly virtue of a Roman. At length, however, the slow, but certain influence of wealth and peace, directed them to a contemplation, and by degrees to an imitation, of those invaluable productions of ancient art, which avarice and vanity, rather than taste, had brought into Italy. Poetry and painting then became the chief and joint objects of attention and cultivation. Pacuvius had the singular merit of being equally eminent in both, and of adorning with his pencil the representation of his tragedies; the treatise of Horace on one art is illustrated by frequent allusions^{*} to the other; and a variety of images and descriptions^d interspersed in the Latin poets are so animated and picturesque, as to admit a well-grounded conjecture, that they were taken from paintings universally known and admired. But, notwithstanding this apparent correspondence between the arts, the close and almost inseparable affinity they bear to each

^d See Polymetis, p. 58. 81. 84, etc.

other was by no means understood. Painting was put in competition with eloquence rather than poetry, and sometimes, as Quintilian thought, to its advantage; and Cicero frequently gives it the praise of being the only art that could rival the powers of oratory. Though the progress of the arts at Rome was rapid and promising, yet it was retarded by a popular, though ill-grounded apprehension, that they tended to enervate public spirit, and would ultimately be subversive of public freedom. With these obstacles to encounter, it is not surprising that they never arrived at such a degree of vigour and maturity, as could enable them to withstand the neglect and contempt which succeeded the mild patronage of Augustus; and it is observable, that the same sympathy which discovered itself in their rise and advancement, marked likewise their decline.

But to take a more minute survey of the relation that poetry and painting bear to each other, we must turn our eyes from ancient to modern Italy, where a variety of the most auspicious circumstances conspired to revive them. The superstition of that period was of a most picturesque and poetical nature; and the arbitrary system of government, which then universally prevailed, was by no means unfavourable to the painter and the poet; for experience has proved, that though the sciences shrink under the control of despotism, the arts will ever flourish

where there is power to foster, and opulence to reward them.

As the works of the artists, who ennobled that period, are still extant, it will chiefly be by comparing them with the most perfect productions of the poets, that the analogy between the two arts can be traced, and their mutual dependencies ascertained with accuracy and precision. Simonides observed, that a picture was a silent poem, and a poem a speaking picture; and that they differed not so much in the objects as the means of imitation, words being in the one what colours are in the other. This observation seems to convey no inadequate idea of the general relation and correspondence between these arts: but on taking a nearer view of the subject, we shall be led into an inquiry, which may not be deemed uninteresting, concerning the comparative efficacy of these means in attaining their proposed end, and into a closer investigation of the properties peculiar to each; or which, being common to both, constitute that affinity, to which they have ever held an undisputed claim.

In both poetry and painting, invention is fundamentally necessary; the merit of which principally arises from a happy combination^e of those materials, which have been supplied by a minute

^e See sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses in the Royal Academy, p. 36.

contemplation of nature, on the most perfect copies of it in the productions of art. Michael Angelo^f was not less indebted to Dante, than Apelles to Homer; and Virgil was, perhaps, the source from which that simplicity and elegance were in some measure derived, which characterize the works of Raphael; so convinced, indeed, were the artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that the strength and spirit of picturesque invention was chiefly dependent on poetry, that they frequently termed the beauties produced by it, poetical perfection^g.

An excellent invention displays itself in the choice of a proper subject^h; which Nicias, one of the most eminent of the Grecian artists, observed, was of no less importance to the painter, than the fable to the poet.

As the impression made by the imitative arts is proportioned to that which is produced by the objects of imitation, it is obvious that they cannot be of too engaging a nature, or of too general concern. This, indeed, is more indispensably necessary to the painter, as he cannot, like the poet, avail himself of those circumstances, which were previous or subsequent to the action which he purposes to represent. The advice, therefore,

^f See Algarotti, on Painting, p. 84.

^g Ibid. p. 87, and the Abbé du Bos's Critical Reflections, p. 80.

^h See Junius, de Picturis Vet. p. 140.

of Aristotle to Protogenes, highly merits attention, when he persuaded him to paint the battle of Alexander, on account of the dignity of the events, and the importance of the consequences.

But if the choice of a proper subject be essential to the poet and the painter, those subordinate circumstances, which tend to embellish it, have no inconsiderable claim to their attention. To avoid extreme minuteness and particularity, to refrain from local prejudice, to dress nature to advantage, and to give to objects all the beauty they are capable of possessing, and not only that which they actually possess, are the best and fullest indications of taste and discernment. It was thus that Apellesⁱ concealed the blemish of Antigonus, by painting him in profile; and that Zeuxis and Claude Lorrain, from a persuasion that partial and exact representations could not be productive of perfection, collected draughts from various objects and scenes, and by this happy union concentrated in their pieces the scattered beauties of nature. But poets and painters, whilst they indulge their fancies, must pay an equal and implicit regard to probability, which is as essential to their respective arts, as truth to history. An occasional deviation, however, from the strictness of tradition, is a licence which has never been denied them. The power,

ⁱ See Quintilian, lib. ii. cap. 13.

indeed, which they possess of representing events “according to desert, and of submitting the shows of things not to reality, but to the desires of the mind,” are the strongest marks of their superiority over the historian. To this indulgence the painter has undoubtedly a higher claim than the poet, as the latter can impress his readers with such exalted ideas of his hero’s character, as will abundantly compensate for any personal defects. The Greek tragedians have, however, exercised the privilege of sacrificing historical truth to greatness of design; and Raphael, in his cartoons, has drawn the apostles with all the advantages of personal grace and dignity.

But if poetry and painting be congenial in the choice of ideas, they are equally so in the arrangement of them. An elegant distribution and concurrence of parts are the only means by which that harmonious proportion is produced, which is ever so delightful to the senses. It is by this disposition alone that the mind of the reader or spectator can be freed from embarrassment, and the composition made capable of any great or general effect. By this, Lanfranc is distinguished from Domenichino, and Virgil from Lucan. A skilful artist will give order even to confusion itself^k; thus painters dispose their figures in groups; thus those who represent battles, either in words

^k See Montesquieu’s Essay on Taste.

or colours, place the object, which is to be particularly distinguished, in the strongest light, and throw the confusion into the back-ground and secondary parts of the picture or poem. From a judicious arrangement and correspondence of parts, alone arises the happy combination of variety with uniformity. From hence is derived the force of contrasts, which are so necessary to support the attention, that even a continued elevation of character or sentiment creates satiety and disgust. Lights and shades are equally essential to a picture and a poem; and the same degree of art, bestowed on every minute circumstance, precludes surprise¹, which is one of the most interesting sensations of the mind. But the force of contrasts is weakened when they are injudiciously introduced: from the sight of one figure, in the productions of some artists, a spectator of discernment can immediately know the disposition of that which is near it; and many poets, by an improper use of the antithesis, have fallen into the same error; by which means, as Montesquieu observes, that perpetual contrast becomes symmetry, and that affected opposition, uniformity.

But these arts are directed to their noblest end, when they imitate manners and passions^m,

¹ See Home's *Elements of Criticism*, chap. 8.

^m See Harris's *Discourse on Music, Painting, and Poetry*.

and lay open the internal constitution of man. Here the excellence of the greatest masters is peculiarly displayed. Strength and energy distinguish the characters of Michael Angelo and Homer; beauty and propriety those of Virgil and Raphael. The majesty of Agamemnon, the sternness of Ajax, and the freedom of the son of Tydeus were not less discernible in the picture mentioned by Philostratus, than in the descriptions of the poet. It is not, therefore, sufficient, that a subject be adorned with all the advantages of elegance and grandeur; the poet and the painter must likewise be conversant in every movement, every symptom of the passions must catch the habits, and express the inward feelings of the mind. They must shake the soul with terror, melt it with love, or rouse it with revenge: the thoughts of the poet must breathe, his words must burn; and the painter must not only give life to his objects, but even a visible and appropriated language. But though these arts must engage the attention by describing manners and passions, there are subjects which are more peculiarly adapted to one than the other. There is a variety of thoughts and sentiments, particularly in the patheticⁿ, of which the painter can convey no specific indications, and to which he cannot give form or being. Shakspeare abounds in

ⁿ See Webb's Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry, p. 102.

these minute touches of nature, which are beyond the reach of the pencil; the painter can indeed make it obvious, that a person is moved by a particular passion, by describing its correspondent symptoms and effects on the body, but cannot intelligibly express the ideas produced by it. It is beyond his power to delineate the transition from one passion to another, or to describe a mixed passion^o, but in a vague and undecisive manner. But on the contrary, there are circumstances and situations which the painter can more closely imitate, and make expressive of stronger feelings than the poet^p. The spectators of the death of Wolfe are all afflicted from the same cause, and nearly in an equal degree; but the expressions of this affliction are varied, according to their difference in age, profession, or country: this difference cannot, without a tedious and uninteresting detail, be marked by the poet, and it is by means of the eye alone, that a just and forcible idea can be formed of it. There are, however, subjects which baffle the skill both of the painter and the poet; in this case, the latter will be silent; and the former, like Timanthes, will hide those feelings which his art is unable to express.

After these general observations on the common

^o See sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, p. 156.

^p See the Abbé du Bos's Critical Reflections, p. 76.

or peculiar properties and advantages of poetry and painting, it may not be uninteresting to take a cursory view of their congenial productions, and of the resemblance which they seem to bear to each other. The lowest branches in each art are burlesque poetry, and caricature; both require a ludicrous subject, and produce similar effects, by pursuing the ridiculous to the utmost pitch of extravagance. An equal analogy prevails between landscape painting and the descriptions of pastoral poetry; both are conversant in rural scenes; both require a particular turn of mind for what is romantic and picturesque; and both must closely study and imitate nature. Claude Lorrain and Titian are in the one, what Theocritus and Virgil are in the other; and the same grotesque wildness equally characterizes the scenes of Thomson, and of Salvator Rosa. Both become more interesting by the introduction of human figures⁹, without which, even the Arcadia of Poussin, and the happiest descriptions of the Sicilian poet, would lose their effect. The characters thus introduced must be appropriated and connected by a principal action, the subject of which should be drawn from the finer feelings of the mind, or the most easy and entertaining branches of natural history. No violent emotions, no furious passions must be described, as they are incompatible with the still-

⁹ See the Abbé du Bos's Critical Reflections, p. 44.

ness and tranquillity of a rural life. Painting in general has this in common with dramatic poetry, that its representations must be confined within the unities of action, time, and place. But the closest analogy between particular branches of these arts, is that of historic painting to epic poetry. In their imitations of nature, both study its most perfect forms, and abstract from them an idea of absolute beauty and virtue. Both must have a sufficient number of characters, which should be so marked and contra-distinguished by their looks and sentiments, as to be known without any explanation. Some one must, however, be peculiarly striking, or the effect will be lost, by dividing the attention amongst a multitude of objects. These characters must be connected by their common relation to the principal subject, which, in both, must be one and entire. Both arts may equally adopt the use of allegories, and employ them with an equal force; but the illustration which the poet derives from the introduction of episodes, is an advantage denied to the pencil; an advantage, however, which is amply compensated by the superior power which it possesses of setting directly before the eyes the most interesting objects, and thus striking the mind instantaneously with those sensations of delight which are not attainable from poetry without a succession of images, and a progressive attention to them.

The impression made by poetry and painting on the fancy and passions, must vary according to the different imaginations and feelings of mankind. They have, however, been universally acknowledged to be productive of the most powerful effects. Without taking account of the fables of antiquity, which might be adduced to show what powers these arts were thought capable of possessing, we know that the songs of Tyrtæus roused the Spartans from their despondency, and animated them with the most enthusiastic love of glory, and contempt of death; and that the inhabitants of Abdera were inflamed with the wildest frenzy at the fictitious distresses of Andromeda, as displayed in a tragedy of Euripides. Nor have less generous sentiments been inspired, or less violent emotions excited by the productions of the pencil. It was not without reason that the philosopher thought them as effectual in reclaiming mankind, as the precepts of morality. An Athenian courtesan, we are told, forsook at once the habitual vices of her profession, on seeing the decent dignity of a philosopher, as represented in a portrait; and the terrors of the day of judgment operated so forcibly, by means of a picture, on the imagination of a king of Bulgaria, that he instantly embraced the religion which held out such punishments, and invited with rewards equally transcendent. Plato seems to have been impressed with as high ideas

of the powers of these arts, though he thought they would be applied to worse purposes, and therefore excluded them entirely from his imaginary commonwealth^r.

If poetry and painting are considered merely as imitative arts, the former will incontestibly claim a preference, on account of the greater extent of its power. It is not confined to the instant; it has not only one "sentence to utter, or one moment to exhibit," but can describe subjects of a lengthened duration, and can avail itself of that progressive and increasing energy, which a succession of images never fails to produce. It operates on the mind, not only by describing objects of sight, but it can bring every sense to its assistance, can give an harmonious voice to the person it represents, and impregnate with fragrance the air that surrounds it. The beauties arising from comparison are also beyond the reach of the pencil; incapable of describing the progress of thought, what idea can it convey of the rapidity ascribed to it by Homer, from its similitude to lightning? It is possible for the figure of the fallen angel to be as accurately expressed on canvas as in the description of the poet; but even a Michael Angelo would want means to impress us with those sensations of his former glory, and present humiliation, which are at once sug-

^r See the Abbé du Bos's *Critical Reflections*, p. 36.

gested by his resemblance to the sun, when obscured or eclipsed. If we consider, on the other hand, the principles and operations of painting, we must acknowledge that, as it makes its address through the medium of a sense which is the readiest vehicle to the mind, as it does not employ artificial but natural signs, which are equally intelligible to all, it may in some respects be said to be a more definite and perfect instrument of conveying ideas than poetry. Those subjects, indeed, in which many circumstances must concur at the same point of time, and in which, if continued, there can be no material variation^s, seem peculiarly adapted to the pencil. But, on the contrary, as words are expressive of all ideas, poetry seems to comprise every possible subject of imitative excellence; and if we add to this the auxiliary graces which it borrows from music, and the powerful assistance which it derives from declamation and action, its superiority will be manifest, both in point of dignity and utility, over the more confined powers of its sister art.

As the same warmth and vigour of imagination, the same creative fancy, the same powers of expression, and the same strength and solidity of judgment, are essentially necessary to the professors of these arts, it may seem surprising that so few have been distinguished in both. The bounds

^s See Harris's Discourses, p. 63.

prescribed to the human understanding are so limited, and the time requisite to attain perfection in any study so considerable, that eminence is usually confined not only to one art or science, but even to a particular branch of it. Sophocles never attempted comedy, or Terence tragedy; Claude Lorrain confined his talents to landscape painting, a subject never attempted by the immortal pencil of Raphael. This country has, indeed, been fortunate in the production of more universal genius, and boasts a Shakspeare and a Hogarth^t, who shine in so many different lights, and on such very dissimilar subjects.

Nor is the strength of genius yet exhausted; men may yet arise equal, if not superior, to their predecessors. What, indeed, may not be expected, where industry is excited by emulation, and merit is not disappointed of its reward; where the arts continue to be patronised by the highest and most illustrious characters, who are best enabled to encourage them by their munificence, and protect them by their authority! The liberal regard paid to painting, and its relation to those arts, which are more peculiarly the objects of academical attention, cannot but be felt at this place, where a learned university bestowed its choicest honours on an artist^u, who

^t See Warton's Essay on Pope, p. 122.

^u Sir Joshua Reynolds.

has ornamented literature no less by his precepts, than the profession by his example ; and which will shortly be adorned by the grateful labours of his pencil, and thus preserve a monument of their connection, to times when the works of a Raphael and a Correggio shall be no more.

HENRY ADDINGTON, B. A.

1779.



ON THE STUDY OF ANTIQUITIES.

SYNOPSIS.

Classical and British—political and monumental—illustrative of ancient manners—and conducive to elegance in the arts.

The pleasure arising from the contemplation of antiquities in general. The study of antiquities conducive to elegance in the arts—in some of its branches tends immediately, in all ultimately, to the illustration of ancient manners.

Classical antiquities: political; connection between the arts and manners of a people—between language and manners—influence on each other. Monumental; architecture—paintings—marbles and coins.

British antiquities: political and national; juridical—poetical. Provincial and monumental; castles—monasteries—churches, etc.

Connection between the several branches in the study of antiquities—advantages arising from such an union. Conclusion.

ON THE STUDY OF ANTIQUITIES.

THE mind of man, always active and inquisitive, seems seldom to exert itself with more pleasure than in retracing the memory of those ages which are past, and of those events and characters which are never to return. There is an involuntary attachment to that which is irrecoverably snatched from our presence, and removed beyond the reach of our hopes and wishes, which we daily experience, while we view the monuments of those who have passed, perhaps but a few years, to the irreversible destiny of human nature: and the sensations which we feel are seemingly excited not more by the suggestion of the general lot of humanity, than by the reflection than they are gone for ever.

This attachment to the past, often indeed undiscerning and invidious in its comparisons of the present, induces us to behold with a kind of religious awe the obscurest vestiges of antiquity.

But these sensations of the mind are then more powerful and poignant, when arising from

the contemplation of places, once the scene of actions, that, perhaps, decided the fate of empire, established the laws of government, or rescued an oppressed people from slavery and superstition: or were once frequented by some of the few who have distinguished themselves from the great body of mankind, and commended their names to the reverence and admiration of posterity, by the invention of arts which contribute to the use and ornament of life; or stand foremost in the annals of science.

And farther, these impressions become doubly powerful, when confirmed by the immediate inspection of any surviving monument of antiquity, the prospect of which excites our reverence in a manner perhaps less rational, yet seemingly not dissimilar to that natural and irresistible impulse which we feel to respect the hoary honours of age.

Of the various monuments of antiquity some are public and some domestic. They record the transactions and conventions of states: and preserve memorials of private life, and specimens of domestic convenience. Some are immediately connected with the scene of action, and existed as present and perpetual monuments of the events which they record. Some preserve in sculpture and other specimens of ancient art, the memory of actions, the consideration of which carries us back to the remotest ages of antiquity.

A diligent examination, therefore, of the remaining monuments of antiquity must be productive of great utility, if taken in that view only, by which the progress of art may be ascertained, and a comparison of the several periods and their different productions be formed, conducive even to the ordinary purposes as well as elegance of modern life; as new modifications of art may be struck out, and new methods of convenience suggested.

But the study of antiquities will appear perhaps more useful and interesting, when it is considered, that there is no one branch of it, if followed with a liberal spirit of research, which does not tend immediately, or ultimately, to the illustration of ancient manners: in the discussion of which we for awhile forget the refinement of modern times, and insensibly accommodate our thoughts and feelings to the romantic and poetical simplicity of former ages.

I. The study of antiquities is divided into various branches, political and monumental, accordingly as they regard the ancient manners and customs of a people, and the monuments of ancient art.

In every nation the state of the arts and sciences has at all times been intimately connected with manners and customs. The arts especially, which receive their form and perfection, as well as derive their origin in great

measures, from the finer feelings of the mind, bear so lively an image of the character of the people by whose united efforts they have been cultivated, that an accurate investigation of their origin and progress, their revolutions, and comparative analogy, together with the monuments of them which have descended to posterity, while it explains the causes which operated on their progress, affords the most effectual means of learning the genius and manners of the various nations of the world.

1. The first object which strikes us, as the first in order and natural pre-eminence, is the language of a people: in tracing which through the many changes which it has assumed, up to its original and naked form^a; and thence again following it through the several periods of culture and growth to its last maturity and perfection, frequent opportunities occur of discovering the origin of important customs and institutions, and the causes of their denomination, in the simple occupations and amusements of rude uncultivated nature.

The extensive influence of opinions and manners on language^b and even of language on

^a See Taylor's *Elements of Civil Law*, p. 553.

^b Harris's *Hermes*, p. 407. Richardson's *Dissertation on the Languages, etc. of Eastern Nations*, chap. i. sect. i. *Traité sur la Formation Mécanique des Langues*, by the president De Brosses, vol. i. chap. ii. sect. 20. Vigneul Marville has a curious passage

opinions, has reached the most civilized and polished ages: but in the earlier periods of society they are closely and intimately connected. While man is yet unacquainted with those arts which administer the conveniences and luxuries of life, and procure so many blessings to enlarged and humanized society, his roughness and impetuosity of temper, unrestrained by law or civil intercourse, the peculiarities of his situation, the nature and variety of his occupations, all conspire to impress their several signatures on the language, which he makes use of to denote his imperfect and newly-formed ideas.

The inhabitants of the rough and barren Attica, early habituated to naval affairs and commerce, have left no obscure testimony of their situation and manners in a dialect which, rough in its pronunciations, while it retained many of the simplest and oldest forms, contracted others, and thus became suited to despatch and business. The most daring metaphors derived from naval

on the character of the English language in *Mélanges d'histoire et littérature*, p. 31. édit. Paris, 1699. The long, laboured periods, which he so much complains of, were adopted by the most learned writers of the age, Milton, Clarendon, etc. They were formed on the imitation of the best ancient classic authors; and were then thought more suitable to the gravity and simplicity of historical narration, than the shorter pointed periods of the French. The reader will meet many just and useful observations on those favourite models of French composition, Sallust and Tacitus, in lord Monboddo's learned and elaborate work on the Origin and Progress of Language

affairs abound in the writings of the Attic poets : from which however the interval of two thousand years has worn off that disgusting appearance, which in similar expressions, frequent also in our own language, and from the same cause, the homeliness of familiar usage renders so unfit for the sublimer kinds of poetry. While the Romans, ambitious only of dominion, whose delight was in war, and whose very profession was the sword, drew their metaphors from the camp, and thus transfused into their language, as well as civil government, the image of their common genius.

2. The history of architecture, like that of the other arts, marks out the progression of manners. Among the Dorians it carried with it the austerity of their national character, which displayed itself in their language and music. The Ionians added to its original simplicity an elegance which has excited the universal admiration of posterity. The Corinthians, a rich and luxurious people, not contented with former improvements, extended the art to the very verge of vicious refinement. And thus (so connected in their origin are the arts, so similar in their progress and revolutions) the same genius produced those three characters of style in architecture, which one of the most judicious critics^c of Greece remarked in its lan-

^c Dionysius Hal. *Περὶ Σύνθ.* sect. 21, etc. Dr. Warton, in his elegant and judicious *Essay on Pope*, p. 175, has bestowed a very

guage. The Dorians exhibited an order of building like the style of their Pindar,—like Æschylus, like Thucydides. The Corinthians gave their architecture that appearance of delicacy and effeminate refinement, which characterizes the language of Isocrates. But the Ionians struck out that happy line of beauty, which, partaking of the simplicity of the one without its harshness, and of the elegance of the other without its luxuriance, exhibited that perfection of style, which is adjudged to their great poet and his best imitators.

Such an art among such a people could not but produce the most exquisite models of beauty and magnificence. But those models are no more. And it is impossible even in idea, (which they can form most adequately, who are best acquainted with this study,) to look towards those plains once covered with flourishing cities, the seat of liberty and science, the glory of the universe; now strewed with the ruins of their past magnificence; without feeling the most

just encomium on this part of Dionysius's treatise, *Περὶ Σύνθεσεως ὁνόματων*, in which he discusses the three different species of composition; the austere, the florid, and the middle, by calling it one of the most useful pieces of criticism extant. For a character of this treatise, and of its illustrious author, see also lord Monboddo in his *Origin and Progress of Language*, vol. ii. p. 557. 560. 587; vol. iii. p. 105, etc. The critical writings of Dionysius never appeared to more advantage, than in the excellent use which lord Monboddo has made of them.

sensible regret at the instability of human grandeur.

The remains however of ancient architecture have been examined and illustrated with a degree of diligence which reflects great honour on the active and liberal curiosity of the present age. Indeed that study can want no recommendation which has thrown so much light^d on history, geography, and chronology ; and to the cultivation of which modern architecture owes all its excellence.

3. As the gradation of this noble art points out the general progress of national manners and taste, the several nicer distinctions of character, and the peculiarities of private life, are more strikingly portrayed in the remains of ancient painting, in their bas-reliefs, their marbles and coins.

The indefatigable spirit, with which men of learned curiosity have conducted their researches after the remaining monuments of antiquity (in the pursuit of which the English, by the general consent of foreigners, have eminently distinguished themselves, and some of the most valuable of which it is the envied boast of this university to possess,) has brought to light paintings, statues, coins, marbles of private memorial as well as public institution, temples, villas, and

^d Fontanini de Antiquitatibus Hortæ. p. xix.

even whole cities, to the peculiar satisfaction of those lovers of antiquity, who had long considered them as the irreparable prey of time, and superstitious zeal, and the last savage triumphs of uncivilized barbarity.

From the fugitive nature of colours, and the fragility of their materials, few are the remains of ancient painting, when compared with those of sculpture. The works of Apelles, Polygnotus, and Zeuxis, have left behind them the echo only of that reputation which once resounded from every side of Greece: a fate which even some productions of modern genius have suffered from time, accident, and the ignorance of their possessors^e. But fortunately this loss is in some measure compensated by the ample and minute descriptions of their most excellent performances preserved in the writings of the Greek poets, travellers, geographers, and others^f.

These precious monuments of antiquity comprehend the most certain testimonies of domestic life, in the representation of their marriage ceremonies, funerals, and sacrifices^g. From the same sources, especially from the remains of sculpture,

^e Winkelmann's *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, p. 2 and 76.

^f Several of the Anthologic poets—Pausanias, Strabo, Philostratus, Lucian, etc.—among the Latins, Pliny.

^g Taylor's *Elements*, p. 278; Spanheim. *Dissert.* ix. p. 757; and Van Dale *Dissertationes*.

is derived the most authentic intelligence of religious and political institutions.

The strict connection which the study of the civil law has with classical learning^h, and the mutual assistance which they lend to each other, appears nowhere more evident than from a diligent study of coins and marblesⁱ; on which so many important decrees were inscribed, and thus transmitted to posterity. And it has been remarked by a very learned civilian (one who perhaps owed the solid reputation, which his writings have acquired him, to uniting with his professional knowledge the most accurate and extensive classical erudition) that the many great discoveries in antiquity, and the use of several curious monuments, which were unknown to former ages, have afforded the present times many happy opportunities of improvement on the wisest systems of preceding lawyers.

History has particular obligations to these antiquities; by which its deficiencies have been supplied, its obscurities illustrated, and its chro-

^h Taylor, Pref. p. 7, 8.

ⁱ *A quorum numismatum ac marmorum studio nunquam abhorui, quinimo huic non minus ac aliis scientiis multis abhinc retro annis omni meo conatu incubui, quod summopere ad exactam et omnibus absolutam Romanæ jurisprudentiæ intelligentiam pertinere cognoverim. Paschal. Caryophilus de Thermis Herculaneis.* But there can be no better testimony of the great utility of coins and marbles in illustrating the civil law, than the very useful application which Taylor has made of them in every part of his *Elements*.

nology and geography often accurately ascertained. Their great importance is sufficiently manifested in that single monument and sovereign record^k, by some esteemed the most precious remain of all antiquity, on which Augustus describes the principal actions of his life.

But the study of these antiquities is never more amusing than in its connection with poetry, A painter is able to discover beauties^l in a picture invisible to another who is unacquainted with the principles of the art, or unacquainted with the works of the best masters. He sees a goddess^m in the Helena of Zeuxis, whose excellence is ill understood by ordinary eyes. In the works of nature, the archetype of art, he perceives exquisite forms and colours, and fine effects of lights and shades, which communicate to him the most lively and delicate sensations; while others overlook the same objects, or behold them with indifference. The same advantage results to poetry from a careful examination of the remains of

^k Monumentum Ancyranum.—vide Chishull. p. 156, etc. Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et private impensa comparavi, etc.

^l The improved taste, and the superior insight into the latent beauties of art and nature, derived from a knowledge and experience in the arts, from their comparison and mutual illustration, the Greeks call *ζεύτερον ὄμμα*, an elegant expression, by which they distinguish this *alter oculus*, this eye of art and discipline, from the natural undiscerning eye of the illiterate and unintelligent.

^m Winkelmann, p. 3.

ancient sculpture. The images of the poets receive new life and spirit from a comparison with the works of their kindred artists. Their conceptions seem to acquire beauties which before were unknown: a delicacy and grace, which would otherwise have escaped the acutest judgment and most refined sensibility of taste. After such a comparison we see the whole of a poetic attitude or description with more enlightened eyes, and, as it were, like those of Diomedⁿ, purged of the film, too gross before to discern the fine texture of celestial forms. It is thus the reader of Virgil's very affecting description feels the powers of his imagination enlarged after studying the Laocoon at Rome. And thus in the flourishing days of Greece, the astonished spectator turned from the statue of Phidias to the awful and majestic Jupiter of Homer^o.

By studying the works of the best masters, the imagination becomes conversant with images of beauty and grandeur, the combination of which enables the artist to approach nearer to the perfect ideal form, than the most exact imitation of ordinary individual beauty^p. From the invaluable remains of antiquity Michael Angelo derived the excellence of his best performances. And Raphael studied their noble simplicity and sedate

ⁿ Iliad, v. 127. Paradise Lost, xi. 412.

^o Addison's Discourse on Ancient and Modern Learning, p. 9.

^p Winklemann, p. 2. 19.

grandeur of expression with the most diligent attention: and, as he more correctly imitated the antique than his great contemporary, more successfully expressed his beauties.

Many of the finest representations on coins were taken from some of the most celebrated statues and pictures of antiquity. Among the moderns many an elegant figure composed by the statuary and painter in the spirit of the antique, has been copied from ancient coins; a species of imitation constantly practised by the most accurate observers of costume, Raphael, Poussin, and Le Brun^q; the success of whose practice will always recommend the study of these antiquities to the professors and lovers of the arts, as long as a taste shall remain for propriety of design and justness of manners; for simple elegance, and the true unexaggerated sublime.

II. As in the study of antiquities the most pleasing and valuable object is the development of manners and customs, so the pleasure of such inquiry becomes doubly interesting, when employed in the investigation of the ancient manners and venerable monuments of our own country.

1. Of the various sources from whence the history of manners may be deduced, there seems to be none which contains such certain and posi-

^q Winklemann, p. 3. 256. Addison on ancient Medals, p. 25. Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, p. 179, 180.

tive information as the study of civil institutions[†]. In the government and laws of a people are discoverable striking features, which mark their true character and manners. We there behold the genius of a nation exhibited in its native form, undisguised by partial representation, and unmutilated by imperfect miscellaneous tradition.

The general disposition of the Attic law points out at once the character of that liberal, humane, and polished people: not less evidently than the dignity of mind and military genius of Rome appears in her political constitution and form of government. Nor are the manners of our own ancestors less discernible in the institutions which they have transmitted to posterity. In that celebrated code[‡], which is esteemed the most regular system extant of ancient laws, we contemplate with pleasure the simplicity and frugality of our British ancestors. While in the Norman institutes we trace in bold outlines the martial spirit of the feudal baron.

But the ancient laws of a people not only exhibit one view of their genius and characteristic manners: they likewise mark their pro-

[†] Taylor, p. 159. Cicero de Oratore, lib. i. cap. 43. Nam sive quem antiqua studia delectant, plurima est et in omni jure civili, et in Pontificum libris, et in xii tabulis, antiquitatis effigies.

[‡] The laws of Hoel Dda, published by Wotton under the title of *Leges Wallicæ Ecclesiasticæ et Civiles Hoeli Boni*. See Taylor, ubi supra; and Barrington on the Statutes, Preface, p. 6.

gression and gradual refinement. And here the British antiquary, besides the natural attachment and generous partiality to the antiquities of his own country, has a great advantage in a regular series of laws through the several periods of our history, over the Roman codes and institutes, and the more mutilated fragments of Grecian jurisprudence. To a liberal and inquisitive mind nothing can be more pleasing than to observe how the manners of a people wear off their original roughness and ferocity, and by the united influence of religion, learning, and commerce, polish into humanity. Especially, as it affords a grateful antidote to the common and melancholy declamation against the times, to find that many enormities of tyranny, cruelty, injustice, and general depravity, are now unheard of, which anciently were frequent objects of penal censure[†].

[†] Barrington, Preface, p. 4; and *Observat.* p. 117, 118. The study of ancient laws is not without its recommendation, in other respects, to the learned antiquary, the scholar, and the critic, on account of their usual accuracy and purity of language. Taylor observes (p. 19.) that the civilians hold the language of the Digests or Pandects to be so pure, that the Roman language might be fairly deduced from it, were all other Roman writers lost. In Barrington's *Observations on the Statutes*, p. 398, mention is made of an extraordinary instance of the purity of the Spanish language used in their ancient laws, which is affirmed by a Spanish lawyer to be more intelligible than other laws made six hundred years afterwards. The same diligent and entertaining writer on

2. The laws then are the most faithful records of the genius, the general character of a people. But there are many peculiarities of private life, and many inferior foibles of domestic character, which are objects rather of ridicule than of the gravity and severity of law. The magistrate, therefore, leaves such to the cognizance of wit, and the chastisement of satire. This inquiry will naturally conduct us to the ample, the curious, the valuable treasures of our old poetry^u; where we shall find that to the ingenuity of our old poets, we are indebted for some of the most animated pictures of ancient manners: which, though often indelicate and overcharged, will always recommend themselves to liberal

the statutes observes, that the modern English comes infinitely nearer to the English of the legislature in their acts, than the translation of the Bible, and thinks the supposition that the English of the Bible hath fixed the language to have been too implicitly admitted. And it has been remarked by others, that many fine examples of eloquence and purity of language occur in the charges which are to be found in the state trials.

^u A knowledge of our oldest poets, and the ancient manners and customs described by them, is necessary for the understanding of the poets which succeeded, and formed on those models the peculiarities of their style, taste, and composition. See Warton's *Observations on Spenser*, vol. ii. p. 264. Till this method of illustration was pursued by their last and best critics, many remote allusions and obsolete customs in Spenser and Shakspeare were either neglected or perversely explained by observations drawn from classical resources, which were often as ill placed as they were learned and ingenious.

curiosity, ever delighted with the delineation of new manners and the customs of less polished ages. And as human nature is in some respects always the same, we are pleased in these representations of ancient manners to meet with portraits which may be confronted with the present times. It is a pleasure not unlike what we particularly feel in perusing the wise sayings of the son of Sirach, in which the nature and passions of the human mind appear to be so exactly studied, that we are often surprised at a seeming novelty of observation, which they carry with them in their remarkable application to living manners.

By another order of poets and their kindred fablers, the old romancers, we are carried higher into a set of manners, where everything is great and marvellous. We meet with nothing but the most exalted feats of generosity and prowess. At the same time we find the fierce spirit of the northern genius combined and tempered with the most enthusiastic zeal of gallantry and courtesy. While the imagination is often elevated to its highest pitch by the tremendous solemnities of Gothic superstition; by the most alarming scenes of magic and incantation; by images of terror, which could have originated only from the darker and more dismal regions of the north*.

* Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance. Letter vi.

3. The severity, or perhaps fastidiousness of history, as it admits not those minuter actions, which, though apparently trifling, tend so much to mark the real character of an individual, so it rejects many collateral incidents in the history of a people, which not only spring from the manners of the times, but have often, upon accurate investigation, been found to have had great secret influence on the most important events. The study of antiquities has here again supplied the defects of history, and made ample provision for the researches of inquisitive curiosity. For the diligence of the antiquary has not only brought to light circumstances which were unknown, or neglected by the historian, but has placed other particular events in a more eminent point of view, and rendered them more conspicuous in their colouring and expression, than is consistent with the arrangement and design of general history.

4. And this the antiquary has been enabled to do by an accurate study of monumental antiquities, the investigation of which contributes so much to correct the misrepresentations and supply the deficiencies of history, as well as to illustrate the most interesting object in the study of antiquities, the state of ancient manners, of which they preserve so many striking images.

The love and reverence of antiquity is so congenial with the natural curiosity of the human

mind, that we seldom view but with a kind of pleasing melancholy any venerable memorial of former times. The mind is seized in the contemplation of them with a variety of sensations, which it finds difficult to discriminate; a mixture of pain and pleasure which it is unable to explain. But when we carry this temper of mind to the examination of the monuments of our own ancestors, their claim to our veneration becomes more powerful, and their address to our fancy more lively; while the reflections which they suggest and the interest which we involuntarily take in them complete the delightful illusion.

In surveying the proud monuments of feudal splendour and magnificence exhibited in the remains of ancient castles, the very genius of chivalry seems to present himself amidst the venerable ruins, with a sternness and majesty of air and feature, which show what he once has been, and a mixture of disdain for the degenerate posterity that robbed him of his honours. Amid such a scene the manly exercises of knighthood recur to the imagination in their full pomp and solemnity; while every patriot feeling beats at the remembrance of the generous virtues which were nursed in those schools of fortitude, honour, courtesy, and wit, the mansions of our ancient nobility^y.

^y Hurd's Dialogue on the Age of Queen Elizabeth, p. 172.
note ^u of vol. i.

We dwell with a romantic pleasure on these vestiges of former hospitality and munificence, the pride and ornament of England: that munificence which was open to all, but particularly to the noble and courteous, and to the minstrel, the honoured recorder of their splendour and festivity: thus exciting the first efforts of wit and fancy, and, therefore, largely contributing to the introduction of every species of polite learning².

5. From these awful remains of fairy magnificence, we pass, with sensations more sober and temperate, to those religious monuments which recall to the memory not so courtly a munificence, but a charity perhaps more extensive and beneficial; which were also the nurseries of science; of science indeed without taste, as of religion without morality. The history of monasteries and other religious houses has afforded employment equal to the ardour of the most industrious antiquary. Nor can we sufficiently admire the indefatigable diligence and extensive learning exerted in collecting the immense treasure of records contained in our monastic antiquities. Though the history of these institutions exhibit too many instances of licentiousness, indolence, and ignorance, yet we ought with gratitude to remember, that even while the inhabitants of the cloister were themselves, for the most part, lost to all

² Hurd, *ubi supra*, p. 177, 178.

good taste, they prevented the surrounding barbarism of those dark ages from entirely extinguishing the light of classical learning: and that to them was owing the preservation of the most valuable ancient authors, the various discoveries of which constitute so interesting a part in the history of learning.

6. No branch, however, of this study appears to afford more extensive field for disquisition than the history of churches. Besides the peculiar solemnity which the sacredness of place connected with its antiquity inspires, the inquisitive mind of a liberal spectator will find ample amusement in the reflections suggested by the funeral monuments^a, and the histories which they describe or recall to his remembrance. By the diligent cultivation of these genealogical antiquities, the memory of many persons has been revived, who would otherwise have been forgotten^b; and the amiable virtues of many a private character have obtained that merited applause which their obscurity of birth or station had denied them.

7. For this purpose public and private repositories have been examined, and elaborate in-

^a See Addison's *Reflections on the tombs of Westminster Abbey*, *Spectator*, vol. i.

^b *Archæologia*, vol. i. Introduction, p. xxiii. xxiv.

quiries been made into ancient records and proofs, that could illustrate the life of an individual and the genealogy of his family.

Great and important are the advantages which have resulted to general history and biography from these critical examinations of ancient records^c. When historical inquiry became thus united with the accurate diligence of antiquarian research, the historian was enabled to separate falsehood from truth, and tradition from evidence. Many doubtful points have been illustrated and confirmed; many misrepresentations have been corrected, and the real motives of actions laid open, which had been disguised by the jealousy of the times, or the partiality of historians. And at length biography assumed that interesting form and dignity of character which has deservedly placed it amongst the favourite productions of every polished people.

Moreover, at the same time that public transactions are more fully, accurately, and justly stated, and the memory of individuals vindicated, the patient labour of investigation is frequently relieved by picturesque images of ancient life; and the antiquary forgets the painfulness of minute inquiry in the pleasure of observing the features of the times more strongly and characteristically

^c Preface to Lowth's *Life of Wykeham*, p. 27.

marked in these partial and peculiar representations, than in the formal exhibitions of general story^d.

The study of antiquities thus useful and interesting is not more comprehensive, than it is connected in its several parts: by the general union and mutual comparison of which, every particular branch derives additional lustre and utility.

An accurate knowledge of the primitive manners and customs of a people tends much to illustrate the earlier periods of their language: while the investigation and analysis of language conduces to point out the genius of a people. But the first principles^e of a language can be thoroughly ascertained only from a diligent study of the most ancient marbles and coins. Thus also the ancient manners of a people are illustrated by their laws: and their laws reciprocally by their early monuments. Coins and marbles frequently throw great light on poetry; as poetry will sometimes reflect a similar light on the obscu-

^d There is another use which ancient records and manuscripts often have in common with coins and tomb architecture. They represent in their marginal illuminations the fashion of ancient armour and building, and other curious particulars characteristic of different ages. They often preserved portraits of remarkable persons; and specimens of ancient apparel; and show what, with the increase of national wealth, was the progress of refinement in dress. See Addison on Ancient Medals: Warton's Observations on Spencer, vol. ii. p. 243, and *Archæologia*, vol. ii.

^e Taylor's Elements, p. 553, 557.

rities of a coin. Coins likewise, as well as seals and medals, besides exhibiting specimens of their peculiar art, mark out the regular progress of architecture^f: the different stages of which are seen also in the various structure of sepulchral monuments. But while they severally contribute to assist each other, all unite in the illustration and embellishment of history, poetry, and philosophy.

To this union of the several branches in the study of antiquities, perhaps is owing the success with which it is conducted in the present age. There have been those who appear to have contented themselves with the laborious part of this study. They adored the precious rust which obscured their coins, and neglected the valuable information which it concealed. Like those who form their opinions of ancient authors from the judgment of others. From whom they admire the vehemence and spirit of Demosthenes, the sweetness of Xenophon, the austerity of Thucydides, the sublime poetry of Plato: and thus descant with warmth on the characters of their style from critics, many of whom understood not the language they were criticising. And here they stop short to contemplate those beauties at a distance. They admire the exquisite decora-

^f Addison on Medals, p. 23. Concerning the architectural ornaments of ancient seals, see also Warton on Spenser, vol. ii. p. 194.

tions that adorn the shrine, but have too much reverence for the divinity inclosed to withdraw the veil.

Those lovers of antiquity, therefore, confined themselves to a necessary, but elementary part of the study to which the collection and arrangement of their curiosities was only an introduction. Thus fixing themselves to one part of the antiquarian pursuits, by a consequence inseparable from too strict an attachment to any single art or science^g, their views in learning became partial and narrow, and their sentiments often bigoted and illiberal.

To their labours, however, and industrious curiosity, the present age has great obligations, for facilitating the acquisition of those materials which are now converted to their proper use. The study of antiquities, once far removed from all the arts of elegance, is now become an attendant on the muses, an handmaid to history, to poetry and philosophy. From this united influence many are the advantages which have been derived to general knowledge. Particularly much of that obscurity which overspreads the first periods in the history of every nation, has already been happily removed from our own by the diligence and sagacity of able antiquaries. And what, indeed, may we not expect farther from an

^g Harris's Philosophical Arrangements, p. 34, 35, 462, 463.

age in which every part of science is advancing to perfection: in which history has attained a degree of excellence unknown to any former period of English literature; and poetry and philosophy have gained new honours; and lastly, in whose character that has so conspicuous a place, which is essential to the success of this study, an inquisitive curiosity and love of truth.

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1780.

ON ORIGINAL COMPOSITION.

JUVAT INTEGROS ACCEDERE FONTES ATQUE HAURIRE.

LUCRETIVS, lib. i. 925.

As there is no speculation more useful and agreeable than that of contemplating nature, so the efforts of genius have been exerted with singular activity and pleasure, in holding her up to the view of mankind through the medium of art. The most extensive and interesting displays of this kind have been in that of Composition. For this, not confined to external appearances and to an instant of time, exhibits the internal operations of the human mind, and brings into one view a connected series of causes and effects. By this art we are led to a certain knowledge of the darling pursuits of man, the nature of his passions, and the extent of his mental abilities.

But in viewing composition, either as the delineation of nature, a picture of the actions and passions of man, or as an effort of an author's genius, we are naturally led to confine our atten-

tion to its independence upon any other literary production, or, in the language of criticism, to its originality. For original composition, being unbiassed, and unsupported by any former work, must ever be stamped with a character of the author's age and country, or consist of the native efforts of the writer's genius. The scenes of nature around him, and the manners and pursuits of those with whom he is conversant, not only furnish him with matter for dispassionate delineation, but even influence the most fervid and lofty flights of his imagination.

The origin of composition, like that of all the other fine arts, is enveloped in obscurity. We can only conjecture concerning its rise, and concerning the most early productions of any nation. The first, however, of which we can judge, correspond minutely with what has been said of original composition. In them we discover the inventions, the pursuits, and amusements of man before his advancement to civilization. In such a period, the passions, not checked by the forms of refinement, nor diffused amongst a multiplicity of objects, display themselves with an ardour and perseverance, seldom to be met with among nations whose manners are highly cultivated. Their affections thus warm and unrestrained, their love of military fame, and simplicity of language, infuse into their compositions a boldness of thought and an expression often highly figurative.

The want of letters in the infant state of society, and the prevailing custom of adapting their compositions to the harp, also impressed a particular form upon the most early productions. The former occasioned the invention of verse, to assist the memory, and the latter favoured the same mode of expression, as being most commodious for the cadence of melody. All these circumstances concurring in the infant state of society, and being similar in every quarter of the world, the most early compositions everywhere assumed the air and dress of poetry. The praise of deities and benefactors, and the achievements of heroes, were conveyed and recorded in song, corresponding with the rudeness of the times.

But in order to behold original sublimity, beauty, and elegance, united in composition, we must direct our view to ancient Greece. Here genius invented almost every form in which the art can instruct or delight; enriched it with arguments to convince the understanding, images to charm the imagination, and incidents to captivate the affections.

Before the time of Homer, all is doubt and uncertainty concerning profane composition. That bards existed before him we are well assured by various authors^a, and even by his own poems, but little more concerning them, than their names,

^a Aristot. *Περὶ Ποιητικῆς*, κεφ. ε and others.

has escaped the ravages of time. Whatever their compositions might be, succeeding ages not only considered him as original, but a most wonderful proof of mental abilities. His thorough knowledge of characters, manners, arts, nature, and mythology, furnished so many pictures of human life, such a variety of beautiful landscapes, and such a diversified sublimity, as have frequently led many to conclude, that he exhausted poetical subjects, and that he is the only original in this species of composition. This, however, is rather the voice of admiration than of judgment. For although examples of every kind of poetry may perhaps be found in Homer, it would be unbecomingly just and liberal criticism to affirm, that his successors drew not from nature, nor trusted to their own inventions.

The mind of man when unemployed is ever uneasy. As soon as the necessary demands of nature are satisfied, convenience, amusement, and pleasure engage his attention. Accordingly, the fine arts were first and most extensively cultivated, during the early periods of society, in fertile countries. To what degree of perfection they were carried in Egypt, the place where they were invented, we cannot with certainty determine, but we have every reason to believe that she contributed to the early civilization of Greece. Happily for Homer, the arts and manners of his country, before his time, had attained to a degree

of improvement, the most propitious for poetry^b, which conspired with his mighty genius to place his productions at the head of original composition.

The most obvious originality after the great father of the epic poem, arose from the invention of the dramatic form of composition. This, however, did not appear with dignity sufficient to draw the attention of criticism, till a considerable time after the days of Homer. Before its rise, the Grecian manners had attained a refinement necessary to its admission: for dramatic composition has never been attempted amongst any people before a very considerable cultivation of their manners. Being the last improvement upon unity and beauty of design in composition, and its power in interesting the passions, it requires not only skill in the poet, but also an improved taste in those around, suitable to works of so much art and refinement.

The origin and name of tragedy are indeed attributed to the song and sacrifice in honour of Bacchus, which men in the very infancy of society observed at the close of their vintage; but Æschylus, when Greece was in her full splendour, first gave it that form and dignity, which refined ages have ever considered as its essentials^c. In his productions we find that

^b Blackwell's Inquiry into the life and writings of Homer.

^c Quintilian, lib. x. cap. 1.

strength of conception, and that vigour and impetuosity of genius, which characterize original composition when the subject is grave and opens to the sublime.

Grecian invention seems not to have been so successful in comedy. Their first compositions of this kind, of which we are enabled to judge, are such as might be expected to flow from the origin mentioned by the great father of criticism^d. Their striking features are a licentious freedom with characters, and a deficiency in chastity of sentiment, which too generally marked original compositions turned to humour.

However prevalent innocence and simplicity might be in the early periods of society, very considerable advances were made towards refinement before men considered them as the chief source of support to any species of composition. The magnificent scenes of nature, and the marvellous exploits of personal courage, gain the attention of a rude people, and are even kept in view as the chief figures in their productions. To these, as society advances, a more calm and steady solemnity succeeds. Those situations in life, to which the generality of men look up with a kind of reverence, and the most remarkable changes, to which such stations are subject, powerfully interest the passions, and are the

^d Aristot. Περὶ Ποιητικῆς, κεφ. ζ.

chief sources of composition to the most early productions of an improved people. An extensive attention to simplicity and innocence is the produce of ease and national refinement. Accordingly, pastoral poetry took its rise in a late age, in Sicily, a country highly polished, and adorned with every luxuriance of nature. These concurring circumstances led the attention of Theocritus to rural life and images, the delineation of which in the character of a shepherd added a new kind of writing to literature; and since his time, refined ages have been equally unanimous in praise of the excellence and originality of his pastoral compositions.

Although the dawning of civilization everywhere presents to us specimens of lyric poetry, Greece has every claim to original excellence in this kind of composition. Here it was also first cultivated in an early period, and in time, by the efforts of genius, its various kinds were brought to a high degree of perfection. Sappho charms with a native tenderness, Anacreon with gaiety, whilst Pindar astonishes and transports with his sublimity.

In taking a general view of original composition amongst the Grecians, after having thus traced their several species of poetry to their rise, our attention is naturally called off from verse to the origin of prose. Its late appearance, like most of the striking features of originality in composition,

may be attributed to natural causes. It has already been shown that poetry is the natural offspring of an illiterate age; and, as a strong attachment to habit and to whatever pleases the senses has a powerful influence over the human character, the Grecian writers adhered entirely to verse during more than three centuries after Homer. Herodotus, their first historian, whose works are the most early Greek compositions in prose that have reached our times, flourished above four centuries and a half after the great father of poetry^e, before which period tragic and lyric productions arose in almost meridian splendour at their first appearance.

The origin of philosophical composition had still a later date. Reason advances towards maturity by a slow and tedious gradation, and during its long imbecility, the imagination and the passions are predominant. It was, therefore, long before the abstract decisions of reason appeared as the chief support to composition. But this delay was in a great measure compensated by the wise and admirable Socrates, who, although he confined himself to oral instruction, formed the minds of Plato and Xenophon, to whom we are indebted for the most early philosophical compositions.

^e According to Blair: and as the first writers in prose are generally supposed to have lived about the time of Cyrus, the chronological allusions are regulated accordingly.

As the government of Greece allowed full scope to the displays of eloquence, and as a superior skill in the art of persuasion led to eminence in the state, oratory here received an attentive cultivation. Its origin, indeed, must have everywhere been coeval with that of society itself, as it is in a great degree absolutely necessary to the support of any promiscuous assembly of men; but the Grecians were the first who excelled in eloquence, and to the original excellence of their orators refined ages have looked up with admiration.

Nor was the government of Greece favourable only to eloquence, it held out incitements to every exertion of genius. Every species of composition therefore, already mentioned, attained in this happy soil a high degree of excellence. This naturally paved the way for criticism, which, under the discernment and taste of Aristotle, assumed in its original appearance an accuracy and refinement, which served as patterns to succeeding ages.

Thus the most distinguished species of composition, appear to have arisen and assumed their original dignity and elegance in ancient Greece. Her authors drew their pictures from the life, and as her first writers in every kind of literature were unassisted by former models, her productions stand unrivalled in point of originality.

Originality is far from being a striking feature

in the compositions of ancient Rome. We find her best poets frequently invoking the Grecian muses, and her philosophers professedly following the sages of the same country. In satirical compositions, however, Rome has an undoubted claim to invention; for her productions in this kind discover an address in attacking vice, and a delicacy in ridiculing folly, not to be met with in the writers of ancient Greece.

In other departments of literature, the general character of Latin composition is that of a happy imitation. A splendid originality could not indeed be expected from a people whose chief delight, before the Augustan age, was in war, and whose genius, after that short interval, was distracted and repressed by civil discord and tyranny. These checked the growth of Roman literature, which although engrafted on the Grecian stock, and nourished by its richness, charms with a native sweetness, elegance, and dignity.

But although the first productions only, in every species of writing, engage our attention, in a general and distant view of original composition, a critical examination will discover originality in every literary effort of genius; those excepted, in which the imitation of a former work is the author's aim.

The great Roman philosopher observes^f, that

^f De Officiis, lib. i. cap. 30.

nature has given to man not only a general but also a singular character. The first in characteristic of the species, the other of the individual. The same observation may be applied to literary productions, and may assist us in estimating their originality. Compositions which rank under a particular species have all a common form or model, by which they are characterized, and, at the same time, each has its peculiarities. The most early production only, in any kind of writing, has an undoubted claim to originality with respect to its characteristic form: the originality of all succeeding works conducted upon the same plan, must be estimated from internal marks of independence.

Every inquiry concerning these is attended with singular difficulty. Amongst polished nations, nature is so much studied through the medium of books, as to render it extremely hard to pronounce with certainty in what instances their authors have trusted to their own observation and genius, and in what they have imitated their predecessors.

Novelty is the most certain proof of originality in the productions of a refined people. Every suspicion of imitation must vanish, when we behold truth before unknown to man, sentiment not before expressed, features of character and symptoms of passion not before delineated, and external beauties of nature described, which never before adorned composition.

An extensive originality of this kind we cannot expect to meet with after the successful exertions of ancient Greece. The chief sources from whence writers draw their materials have been accessible in all ages and countries. The urgent demands of nature, man's internal sense of right and wrong, his emotions and passions, have ever been the same, with little variation.

Both animate and inanimate nature have preserved their appearances, and made a similar impression upon the observation of every age, and the early efforts of genius being directed to the sublime, the beautiful, and pathetic, whatever was most magnificent, pleasing, and affecting in nature, were soon delineated in composition, with the most obvious and splendid embellishments which fancy and taste could suggest. Emulation, the most powerful incentive to invention in polished life, animated the Grecian philosophers and poets to the pursuit of every species of novelty, which they thought capable of affording instruction and delight.

To the same objects the literary efforts of succeeding ages were necessarily directed, and reason and taste confined them to the same or similar means in order to accomplish their purposes. For as in the natural world nature has ever supplied the seeds of fruit and ornament, and the sun called them forth to use and beauty, so in the literary, whatever objects present themselves to

the senses and imagination of man, have afforded materials for writing, and the human mind has displayed them in composition either for instruction or rational pleasure.

Novelty, therefore, although the most certain, is not to be deemed the only test of originality. Coincidence in thought and expression, for any considerable continuance with a former production, will ever afford proof of imitation^s; but wherever no such coincidence can be discovered, and the author appears master of his subject, we have the greatest reason to pronounce, in general terms, that the composition is original.

The most obvious originality in the late productions of any species of composition, arises from the choice of a subject. To select one from nature, or invent one according to probability, which, whilst it is stamped with the charms of novelty, opens the most important purposes of its species, is a most noble effort of genius, and diffuses over a composition a manifest air of originality.

This must ever be more or less evident, according to the dissimilarity or likeness of the subject to that of any former production in the same kind of writing. When an established model of writing is applied to the delineation of one highly novel, it is even productive of a new spe-

¹c Dissertation on Imitation and the Marks of Imitation.

cies of composition. Such are Tasso's *Amynta*, the heroi-comic poem of Alessandro Tassoni, and Denham's *Cooper's Hill*.

Dramatic and philosophical composition, whose aim is the delineation of common life, or the investigation of truth, admit not of such a splendid originality from the choice of a subject, as those in which the flights of the imagination are indulged; but this may be compensated by a nice observation of nature, and a close connection of causes and effects, which must ever tend to prove that the author drew from life, and trusted to his own penetration and judgment.

A coincidence with nature and truth is not only the most extensive criterion of laudable originality, but also of good writing in general. Compositions which disregard the one and violate the other, may afford pleasure from the charms of novelty and surprise, but being neither founded on taste or reason, it vanishes upon the smallest exertion of the judgment. Such were those productions which appeared in Europe during the middle ages, known under the general title of romance. Their originality cannot be called in question; but it is of that kind which invention, directed by taste, will never pursue.

But although the happy choice of a subject may give an external air of originality to a composition, the exertion of abilities and attention is requisite in order to give it that internal strength,

consistence throughout, and easy flow of expression, which generally mark an original production. These will appear most perfect when the subject corresponds with the peculiar bent of the author's genius, which, unchecked and unbiassed, will impress a similar complexion upon his productions, and render them independent in the eye of just and liberal criticism. In Sophocles we discover a native solemnity and correctness, in Euripides, and even in Virgil, whose chief excellence consists not in originality, a tenderness and majesty peculiar to themselves. In the productions of Tibullus we meet with the spontaneous sentiments of a mind turned to the pathetic, and in Milton the warmth and loftiness of a genius formed for the sublime.

But in some compositions the delineation of nature is so distinct and animated, the exertions of the author's invention so lively and vigorous, and the ideas so new in themselves, or the manner of their application so uncommon, as to render it needless to inquire whether they owe their originality to the happy choice of a subject, or to the peculiar bent of the author's genius. Such are Thomson's Seasons, the inimitable satires of Cervantes, Butler, and Swift, and in particular the productions of Shakspeare. He needed no assistance "to hold up the mirror to nature," or "to glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," in order to render his compositions sublime and beautiful.

As it is but reasonable to suppose that the best description must ever be made from the most perfect archetype, so we may justly assert, that original composition must ever excel imitation as much as nature excels the most masterly touches of the pencil. Human abilities and language are unable to do justice to external magnificence, beauty, and delicacy, but the delineation of them in composition will be most just and animated when drawn from observation, and under the sensations which such appearances of nature are apt to excite.

With respect to those parts of a production which depend on internal feeling, the advantages are still more in favour of original composition. In imitation, every faculty of the mind is restrained; but when nature only is considered as the archetype, and the author trusts to his own abilities, every mental power is freely called into action. The judgment then displays its native strength, the affections rise to their highest degree of warmth, the imagination exerts itself in its boldest flights, and the efforts of every faculty of the mind concur to render an original composition of genius the noblest production of human abilities.

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CHRIST CHURCH.

1782.

ON THE USE OF HISTORY.

THE great object of education is to prepare us for the due discharge of those various and extensive obligations which belong to us as men and citizens. It happens, however, that the foundation of those virtues which are to render us useful and happy, must be laid at a time when we are least willing to receive instruction, when we are in search rather of amusement for our imagination than of employment for our reason. In that early season we are apt to withdraw ourselves with disgust from pursuits which hold out to us no superficial allurements. The great truths of morality, if they be inculcated in their original simplicity, have little influence; the importance of their object is a consideration too remote to affect us, while we are offended by the coldness or terrified by the severity of the form in which they are conveyed.

Aware of these difficulties, the instructors of mankind have been in all ages solicitous to dis-

cover popular and efficacious vehicles for their admonitions. Instead of contenting themselves with peremptory assertions, they have had recourse to illustrations; laying aside that air of dogmatism and authority at which the impetuosity of youthful passions is so apt to be disturbed, they have either won our assent by the insinuating power of fiction, or commanded it by a direct reference to facts drawn from real life. Against such modes of instruction they were well assured no prejudices could be entertained, nor was it in the power of the ignorant and superficial to prevent their reception or weaken their effect.

Of the two principal vehicles of instruction, History and Poetry, it has been usual to give the preference to the latter; and this opinion is supported by such authorities as it would be neither safe nor decent to oppose. The advocates for history, however, may well be silent upon its comparative utility: its absolute use will supply them with sufficient subject of inquiry, and sufficient ground of panegyric; and poetry itself is never more successfully employed than in adorning those materials which it borrows from its rival.

It is true, the rules of conduct with which experience supplies us, are those which make the most permanent impression;—what we have acquired with difficulty we do not willingly resign;

what our own sufferings have taught us, we cannot easily forget; and however we may reject the authority or doubt the veracity of others, we generally treasure up with care, and regard with confidence, the result of our own observations. But unhappily this knowledge is frequently acquired too late to be of much advantage to us. It is in our very progress to it that our situation is determined, and the last stamp is fixed upon our character; we have need, therefore, of experience before our entrance upon the scene from whence it is to be derived. The history of past ages offers us a substitute of which it is our duty to avail ourselves; and those who have flattered themselves that they were living not only for themselves but for posterity, have lived in vain if we refuse to study their characters and to profit by their example.)

(The uses of history are many of them relative; —to each particular class of men it presents peculiar and appropriated advantages; but the circumstances of general utility for which it is remarkable are the first that attract our notice.) A judicious reader of history will certainly be solicitous to collect from it such precepts as immediately regard his professional character. Yet these, however important, will not be the first objects of his inquiry. The foundation^a of every

^a Bolingbroke.

character, he will remember, should be the same; should be laid in virtue^b; the materials, therefore, of which this foundation is to be composed, will be the first that he collects—he will afterwards descend to more minute inquiries, and having stored his mind with good examples of every kind, will choose for the objects of his imitation those which come most easily within his reach, and agree most nearly with his temper and designs.

Of the general uses of history, therefore, the aid which it lends to virtue is the most distinguished and extensive. To be convinced that it is capable of lending this assistance in a very considerable degree, we need only reflect a moment upon “the manner in which virtuous impressions are usually excited^c.” If we see an act of generosity, of courage, or of any other virtue performed—if we hear it related—we not only admire the author of it—we are disposed to imitate him—“a sympathetic emotion of virtue is instantly awakened in our minds”—a principle of the purest nature is instantly created there, which waits only for opportunities to call it into action. It is true, these impressions are not often lasting; but let them be frequently repeated—let us be long conversant with the characters which excite them, and they will become habitual—they will

^b Priestley.

^c Lord Kames.

take place of less worthy sentiments, and so occupy the mind that it shall neither have leisure nor inclination to encourage grosser images. But where are these examples to be found? Our own experience will perhaps supply us with a few; but their numbers will be so small, the motives of them will be so mistaken or misrepresented—so many circumstances will occur to obscure their lustre and obstruct their influence, that it will be in vain to trust to them. Besides, the habits of virtue should, if possible, precede experience. Instead of seeking those habits in the world, we are to carry them thither—if they are not in our first outset our protectors and our guides, we shall hardly find them in our progress.

It is by an acquaintance with the illustrious characters which have gone before us, that we are to prepare ourselves for the parts we are to sustain. History enables us to live and to converse with those characters—but of the friends with whom we associate, we imbibe the spirit; nor can we recur with frequency and fondness to the stories of antiquity, without deriving from them some portion of those virtues by which their heroes were distinguished.

The characters which history proposes to our imitation are not forced upon us by any other authority than their own intrinsic excellence;—they are exposed to our severest scrutiny—the most secret motives of their conduct are de-

veloped, and we are left to draw our own conclusions, which will certainly terminate in favour of virtue, when we find that the best actions produce ultimately the most beneficial consequences, and that the honours which contemporary envy or competition may have denied to excellence, are amply supplied by the candour and gratitude of posterity.

But the models which history presents are not more remarkable for the perfect form in which they are exhibited than for their infinite variety. It is by contemplating a variety of models, by selecting from each of them what is most beautiful and attractive, that the artist advances towards perfection, and comes nearer that ideal beauty which his mind had previously conceived. Something like this will be done by him who studies history with attention and discernment. Acquainted with all the good and great who have gone before him, he will derive advantages from all of them, and however he may go finally in search of professional improvement to some particular object of imitation, he will have formed his general character not upon the credit of any single authority, but upon the united examples of all good men in every age and in every country.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that the same pens which have described virtue in its most commanding or persuasive form, have delineated vice also in its darkest and most offensive colours.

It has indeed been objected, that the representations of historians are sometimes favourable to vice; that the examples which they record of successful villany occur too frequently not to stimulate the turbulent passions of some, and to damp the virtuous enthusiasm of others. But the objection is either malignant or superficial; traced to their distant consequences with candour and attention, these examples will be found, as well as others, to answer the true end of history—what began in vice will be seen to end in misery; if not to its immediate author, to his friends, his posterity, or his country.

History, however, would be but an inadequate substitute for experience, if it served only to strengthen the disposition to virtue—if it did not likewise quicken the discernment, and supply us with that cautious wisdom, that knowledge of the world, as it is called, upon which men of mere experience are so fond of expatiating. It is here, indeed, that history is a more able teacher than experience. In real life we have not often coolness to examine, nor leisure to discriminate, the characters which surround us. Historians, remote from danger, and unbiassed by interest, have remarked, with accuracy, every appearance which the ambitious and designing usually assume—they have penetrated the secret motives of human actions—stripped them of their ostensible reasons, and exposed their real sources.—Not a

passion is there of which they have not demonstrated the effects, not a vice which they have not traced through all the complicated schemes it can invent, and detected under all the artful disguises it may wear. But the stories they relate, though of other times, are not of other beings than those with whom we are to associate. The knowledge of past ages is, with very little variation, the knowledge of our own, and it is our own fault if we neglect to apply it to our advantage.)

An acquaintance with history, while it enables us to counteract many designs which may be formed against us, and to overcome many dangers to which we may be exposed, will teach us also to endure with fortitude the unavoidable evils it is our lot to suffer. We shall remember that we are but treading the same path of difficulty, where greater and better men have gone before, and be convinced that no class of men has a right to complain of evils from which none are exempt.

It is impossible to study with attention the characters which historians have drawn, without entering deeply into the events they have related, without tracing them from their commencements to their conclusions, and investigating all their causes and consequences direct and collateral. From hence we shall derive, what are of almost equal importance with virtuous habits,—habits of consistency and regularity. Our conduct will

insensibly acquire a systematic dignity and propriety. Enabled to calculate the result of every plan which may be laid before us we shall enter without caution upon none, and what we have begun deliberately we shall pursue with steadiness—without danger of delusion or of capricious deviation. A philosophical attention to this part of the study, carries with it another advantage of which we are not perhaps at first aware. Accustomed to trace facts up to their first principles, and to retrace them from those principles to their last results, we acquire gradually the best habits of reasoning; we learn to argue with the precision of geometry, and the subtlety of logic.

(But our minds^d while they are informed and enriched by the study of history, are at the same time opened and enlarged.) Many of those local and temporary attachments, many of those ungenerous and illiberal prejudices, which our ignorance had cherished with so much fondness, are resigned without regret as we advance in our historical inquiries. We discover that other ages and other countries besides our own have a claim to our admiration—that virtue and abilities are not the growth of any particular clime or season, but that all countries and all times have given birth to characters worthy our affection and veneration. We cannot return from such pur-

^d Bolingbroke.

suits without finding the circle of our benevolence enlarged—without feeling for mankind in general, those sentiments of kindness and regard which might have been otherwise confined to the narrow limits of our own immediate connections, or at most of our own country.) And let it not be feared that this liberality should go too far;—that measure of local attachment which every state requires in its members will still remain. The patriotism of a British reader will certainly not be weakened by an acquaintance with general history—in no country—in no age, will he discover an object so worthy his partial regard and reverence as the government to which he has the happiness to be subject.

From its impartial distribution of blame and praise arises an important part of history's general utility:—many there are who are content to struggle through life with every evil which may befall them—to encounter cheerfully every labour which may be suggested, and to endure without a murmur all the injuries which envy or malevolence may bring upon them, while they are animated by the hope that posterity will do them justice—that they shall live in the page of the historian, and be proposed to succeeding ages as objects of gratitude and models of imitation. There are scarcely any bounds to the influence of this sentiment, and of its kindred one, the dread of contempt and detestation,—they are amongst the

most powerful and the noblest springs of human actions. History sets them instantly in motion, and if it promoted no other end than this, its extensive utility would be established beyond controversy.

Such are the general uses of history—the advantages which all are interested in deriving from it, and which all who seek may find in it. But these general uses are the result of that nice and critical examination with which historians have investigated particular events and characters. It is by tracing man through all the pursuits in which he may be engaged—by demonstrating the nature and effect of every situation in which he may be placed, that they are enabled to lay open to us his internal constitution—to acquaint us with his sentiments and passions—to represent to us his moral character.

It is evident, therefore, that from the works of writers whose inquiries are so comprehensive and so accurate, every particular description of men may derive not only general but professional instruction, not only such precepts as concern them in common with all other readers, but such as are immediately applicable to their peculiar stations and employments.

Of princes history is emphatically called the teacher and the guide:—they are the class of men to which its admonitions are of the first importance—it is almost the only source to which they

can apply with confidence. They can undertake no enterprise, they can adopt no measures, of which history has not predicted to them the consequences; and from the poison of flattery and falsehood, from the designs of interested followers, from the errors of weak and inexperienced counsellors, history is the only refuge to which they can betake themselves. To those who share their confidence—those who are intrusted with delegated authority, the same guide is necessary;—they, too, are frequently unacquainted with truth till they find it in the page of the historian, and often would they be seduced by interest, often would they be intoxicated with power, were not the historian at hand to warn them that the gratifications of private interest bring with them but a fleeting pleasure, and that power not circumscribed by justice is as precarious as it is unwarrantable.)

Nor is it in active life alone that the relative uses of history are acknowledged. To the philosopher, whose employment it is to observe mankind from a distance, and speculate upon their characters without mingling in their pursuits, a field of inquiry is opened which he may traverse with advantage and security. He may trace in it the progress of the human mind from its rude to its cultivated state—the improvement of manners—the rise—the decline and the revival of letters;—not a subject worthy his inquiry can be suggested

upon which history will not furnish him with examples and with arguments.

The precepts which history delivers to particular ranks of men may be sometimes neglected or overlooked; to some they may seem not sufficiently decisive—to others not sufficiently interesting; and many there are who have neither leisure nor inclination to recur to them; but the awful and complete examples which it sets before the eyes of nations can neither be overlooked nor misinterpreted. When they are told in the most positive terms, when they are convinced by the relation of uncontroverted facts, that the same causes have invariably produced in empires the same effects—that the greatness which was established by virtue is undermined and destroyed by luxury, and that the vices of individuals terminate at length in the destruction of the whole, they would require not, we should think, a more powerful admonition. If this should be insufficient to the promotion of national virtue, it will be in vain to look for any other inducement. If they refuse to avail themselves of the experience of other ages and other countries, they can only be taught by the fatal lessons which their own will one day bring with it.

In the history of antiquity we all of us have an interest—it is connected with the earliest and most delightful part of a liberal education, and is necessary to the illustration of those enchanting

monuments of poetry and eloquence which are deservedly the first objects of our study. The annals of our own country will be that part of modern history to which we shall be most powerfully attracted. We hear much of the beauty of our constitution, the wisdom and impartiality of our laws, but unless we trace the progress of that constitution, unless we mark the origin and improvement of those laws, we can never have that animated affection, that perfect veneration for them, which it becomes us to feel and to encourage. Let us not upon this subject be content to repeat the sentiments of others, and to glow with a borrowed enthusiasm. We shall then only have right to be proud of our attachment, when it is confirmed by experience and enlightened by intelligence.

To the study of history, useful and delightful as it is, objections have not been wanting; but they are the objections of ignorant and vain, or of gloomy and malignant cavillers. To what purpose, it has been asked, should we recur to the history of past ages when every page of it is replete with the evils which vice or folly have brought on mankind? Can we return from such pursuits either delighted or improved? Are they not, on the contrary, likely to awaken in our minds a contempt and detestation of our species? It is true these objections are not entirely without force;—but when our eyes are weary of the vices

which history records, let us turn to the virtuous characters it has celebrated : though thinly scattered amid the lengthened annals of many ages, yet are they drawn in bold and striking colours—let the gloomy objectors to this study be put to silence when they are reminded of Socrates and Aristides—of Phocion and Epaminondas.

Other objections to historical inquiries have been deduced from the abstracted and desultory pursuits to which they may sometimes lead. The principles of our profession, whatever it be, the studies immediately connected with it, are sufficient, it is said, to claim our whole attention, and from these the captivating subjects of history may withdraw us too frequently and too far. These objections, however, go no farther than to quicken our progress through such parts of history as regard not immediately our particular designs. It will hardly be contended that a statesman loses time in examining the rise and fall of governments, or that an acquaintance with the history as well as the principles of commerce, retards the advancement or obstructs the fortunes of those who are engaged in it. Experience, to which these objectors are perpetually directing us, is indeed our best instructress, but we can profit little by her precepts unless they are founded upon those of history ; they will increase our vanity and petulance, without much augmenting our knowledge or strengthening our talents, and it is

one great use of history that we learn from it what we are not able to perform as well as what we are; that we are taught to estimate the proportion of human powers to human attainments, and to enter on our career with diffidence and caution.

Such are the advantages of history, considered as the sum of human conduct—as the source from whence examples alike of human greatness and of human frailty are to be derived;—but to the marks, which it bears in every page, of a superior agency—to the proofs which it exhibits of the divine wisdom, justice, and benevolence, it owes the greater part of its utility and dignity—nor can the mind find anything more likely to augment its admiration and reverence of the Supreme Being, than the history of that world of which he is the Creator and the Governor.

C. BARKER,
CHRIST CHURCH.

1783.

ON THE USE OF MEDALS.

THE veneration for antiquity, which early education has made habitual to our minds, prepares us to receive with delight whatever carries us back to the consideration of ancient times. We regard it however with additional satisfaction, if it happens to be nearly connected with the important events of those days, or can lead us to a more intimate acquaintance with those illustrious characters, whose writings still continue to delight, and whose actions still animate us to the pursuit of what is fair and good. The minutest circumstances then become valuable, because they illustrate the great objects of our study, in the same manner that the rudest inventions of early ages are entitled to our respect, because they opened the way for future discoveries in the arts of civil life.

Encouraged by this attachment to antiquity, the friends of learning have ever exerted unwearied diligence in examining the mutilated remains of ancient art. No specimen of sculp-

ture has been neglected, however trivial in itself, if it afforded the faintest hope of ascertaining any important truth. Marbles, statues, vases, have been sought after with avidity, not merely as objects of idle curiosity, but as conducive to real knowledge. The success of the design has indeed been answerable to the zeal with which it has been prosecuted. It is curious to observe in how many instances these precious remains have opened to us a source of genuine information, how many of them have authenticated some transaction of public concern, or presented to our view some interesting picture of domestic life.

Amongst the several monuments of ancient art, few have been rescued from obscurity with greater eagerness than medals: a mere common observer, upon the slightest examination, finds in them an infinite source of amusement and delight. A long succession of heroes passes before his eyes, whose names history has made familiar to him, some of whom stood forth as the guardians of their country, by protecting its civil rights at home, or spreading the terror of its arms abroad. Others, whose efforts were no less beneficial to it, when employed in the cultivation of those arts to which human life is indebted for improvement and ornament. Many also who in less conspicuous scenes of life, contributed their humble aid to the public welfare, are thus rescued from

obscurity, and commended to the notice of posterity.

The pleasure which results from this general survey, every man will readily acknowledge, who has experienced those powerful sensations which the portraits of illustrious men never fail to call forth. A pleasure arising from feelings which all men in a certain degree possess, it is possible for every man alike to receive. To those, however, who extend their views beyond mere amusement, and who consider instruction as the proper object of antiquarian research, medals open an ample field for useful investigation. There is no branch of classical learning which does not receive from them illustration and embellishment. There are many which, without their assistance, it would be scarcely possible to extricate from the obscurity which envelopes them.

In the study of classical antiquities, the first object which attracts our notice, as being, indeed, the foundation of every other part of the science, is the study of the ancient languages. To an inquisitive mind no pursuit suggests topics more highly interesting, nor more amply repays the labour of minute research. While we admire the wonderful perfection of the ancient languages, we naturally form a wish to resolve them into their first principles: to view them in their most simple state; and then to mark the gradual improvements by which the refinements of succeed-

ing ages enriched them: to form, in short, a complete history of those languages, tracing them from their rude origin, to the finished state in which we now see them.

Medals assist the antiquarian in the prosecution of this interesting inquiry: they preserve, in their original form, the elementary characters of the ancient languages; they enable him to mark out the progressive improvement of their alphabets; to ascertain what letters were in use in the earliest ages, and what were added by the refinements of later times: to distinguish between the different forms of the same letters, and the various modes of writing, which prevailed at different periods: to observe with accuracy the nicer modifications of language, occasioned by the variety of dialects^a: nor is this view of the simple elements of the ancient languages to be deemed useless, from which the general theory of language derives such important benefits.

The science of etymology, by a close attention to the various alterations of letters, would be freed from much of that error and uncertainty which the nature of the subject but too easily admits. The general analogy of the language of Rome to that of Greece, is clearly ascertained by the similarity of their original characters, at the same time we have the most convincing

^a Spanheim, Dissert. ii. de usu et præst. num. antiq.

proofs of their derivation from the same common parent. Verbal criticism would likewise receive great assistance from the same source, if the earliest writers of antiquity were to be tried by their proper standard, by the state of the language at the time at which they wrote. The reader of Homer should study him in his own language, and not expect to find in his writings those powers and characters with which succeeding Greek writers enriched their alphabet^b.

Besides what belongs to the more abstruse parts of grammatical disquisition, medals have many curious circumstances to offer which relate to the history of the ancient languages in their most perfect state, which mark their progress and duration. Were other testimonies wanting, they afford us sufficient proof of the great extent of country, over which, by the progress of conquest and the establishment of colonies, the wonderful language of Greece was disseminated. They teach us also, that after the final decay of their empire, the language of that elegant people still maintained its boasted superiority, and was preserved by the Greek colonies with scarcely any exception, not only as the language of literature, but as the legal dialect of public transactions^c.

^b Taylor, S. C. Marcianum, p. 555.

^c See Patin Histoire des Medailles.

The utility of medals, however, if it extended no farther, would perhaps meet but with few advocates. It is generally thought that this minute attention to the mere elements of language, amuses our curiosity without advancing our knowledge. It is not upon this foundation, therefore, that medals rest their claim to our attention and regard. They appear in a much higher point of view, as opening to us a source of historical information, as confirming the events recorded by the ancient historians, as enabling us to correct their errors, and supply their deficiencies.

It is the fate of all written histories to descend to posterity perplexed with intricacies which the nicest discernment finds it difficult to unravel. To the testimony of contemporary historians, which is generally esteemed the most certain criterion of truth, we cannot always give so implicit a confidence as to leave no room for doubt or apprehension: while some are seduced by interest, others misled by ignorance, their accounts will necessarily vary: the truth will often be totally forgotten, or at best its genuine purity will be disguised by partial representation. Additional difficulties arise in the ancient historians from the obscure medium through which at this distance of time, we view the events which they relate, and from the mistaken zeal of those who have frequently perverted their sense,

given to their expressions a signification which they never intended them to convey: we cannot wonder, therefore, sometimes to find in them obscurities not easily to be cleared up, and accounts of similar events not always faithfully correspondent.

But while we lament these difficulties, we shall learn to set a proper value upon those materials which assist us in removing them, which enable us to develop the real state of facts; even where apparently there is no falsehood to refute, it is highly satisfactory to the mind to have truth confirmed: the evidence of history itself can never be demonstrative; it is necessary, therefore, to have recourse to collateral circumstances for such proofs, as the object immediately before us will not supply us with.

This is the true light in which medals are to be considered as illustrative of ancient history. They are in reality public records, authorized by the legislative body of the people. Where present facts alone were recorded, and such as were universally known to be true, it was not in the power of ignorance or prejudice to misrepresent them: we cannot therefore hesitate to give them our immediate assent. When we see the Dacian mourning over his broken armour, or the Parthian resigning his standard, we instantly acquiesce in the truth of the victories of Augustus. is a plain appeal to our understanding, which

no scepticism can refuse to believe, no ingenuity of argument pretend to controvert.

The facts, however, which medals record, are of the most important nature, and form the most essential part of historical inquiry. The success of an expedition, the defeat of a province, the establishment of a colony, a treaty of peace, alliance, or commerce, every great transaction, whether of peace or war, is thus transmitted to posterity. A regular series of medals, therefore, would form of itself a complete body of history. In many periods, indeed, where the ancient historians have afforded us little light, they have been found amply to compensate for the deficiency^d.

While events are thus faithfully recorded, the particular time at which they were transacted is generally determined with equal certainty. Chronology, therefore, is obliged to medals for correcting many of its inaccuracies. The medals of the free cities of Greece frequently bear the exact date of their foundation: the great exploits of the Roman emperors have their several periods assigned to them upon their medals with the minutest accuracy. Thus when their successful expeditions, their victorious returns to the capital, the supplications which the people offered up for

^d Vaillant, *Hist. Arsacidarum*. *Hist. Ptolomærum*. Stukeley's *Hist. of Carausius*.

their welfare, are all precisely marked; they form so many distinct periods to which the mind can recur with certainty, and by whose assistance it can recollect at pleasure the most remarkable events through the whole history of the empire.

Geography receives equal illustration from a careful examination of medals. While they correct errors in the name of a province or city, they generally affix to it some distinguishing mark, which, like the beautiful epithets of Homer, places its situation immediately before our eyes^e. They point out besides, many curious circumstances relating to its origin, its privileges, and immunities: the symbol at the same time frequently denotes the natural produce of the country, its progress in navigation, commerce, or other arts of civilized life. The fertile soil of Alexandria is represented on a medal of the emperor Adrian, by the usual attributes of plenty, corn and vines. The genius of Asia on a medal of the same emperor, rests upon the prow of a ship, in order to signify that from that quarter of the globe arose the greatest discoveries in navigation.

The light which medals throw upon genealogical antiquities is no less considerable. They enable us to trace out the origin of the greatest families of antiquity: their several connections

^e Spanheim, Dissert. ix.

and alliances: the magistracies and other offices which they held, both civil and military: their surnames, titles, and honours^f. Let it not be objected, that these are topics of mere entertainment: they are intimately connected with the study of history, and without some knowledge of them, it is impossible to carry that study to any degree of perfection.

The lover of antiquity, however, while he values medals for illustrating the events of history, and establishing their credibility, regards them perhaps with double satisfaction, when he considers that they supply him with many essential points of information, which he in vain expects to find in the writings of historians: points, however, which are highly worthy his notice, as they display the genius and character of the people whom he admires, and lead to that which is the great object of historical research, the knowledge of manners.

No inquiry, perhaps, throws so much light upon the manners of a people, as the study of their legal polity. Whatever be their mode of life, whether simple or refined, their civil institutions will be framed accordingly, and in the general tenor of those institutions, their real character will be displayed in its native colours, without disguise or artificial ornament. The

^f Spanheim, Dissert. viii.

ancients, therefore, with that happy elegance of allusion peculiar to themselves, termed the laws of a people the morals of the state^g. The historians of antiquity cannot be expected to supply us with sufficient knowledge of their civil institutions. The nature of general history indeed will not suffer it to descend to a particular description of them, and unless we have other resources to apply to, our acquaintance with them must be very trifling and unsatisfactory.

Medals are the sources from which much of our knowledge upon this subject has been derived: it is true, they cannot present us with a regular series of laws, so as to ascertain their progress and improvement, but they at least bring to light many particular ones, which enable us to form some idea of the general complexion of the whole. The medals of the Greek cities preserve some faint traces of Grecian jurisprudence, as well in the public decrees and conventions as in the private ordinances which they record^h. To the civil institutes of the Romans their medals are the most certain guides: for every law which the interest of private families procured for the people, for every decree of an emperor which was calculated to promote the welfare of the empire, the senate adopted this as

^g Πθoς τῆς πόλεως. See Taylor's Civil Law, p. 159.

^h Evelyn on Medals, p. 55.

the best mode of expressing their gratitude, and delivering the remembrance of it to future ages.

The study of the civil law, therefore, has always been found to have a great connection with the study of medals, and to receive illustration from them in many of its most abstruse parts: this connection, indeed, extends more generally to every monument of classical antiquity, by the successful application of which that study has been cleared of many of its superfluous encumbrances, and its systems have been made more simple and elegantⁱ: this advantage, however, is reciprocal; for an acquaintance with the civil law is a great help to classical learning, and supplies us with opportunities of explaining many passages of difficult interpretation in the ancient writers.

But while many of the civil institutes of the ancients are thus preserved on medals, the knowledge which they give us of their customs is far more extensive and complete: the striking ceremonies of their religion; their modes of sacrifice; their festivals and public games; are all represented, as in a picture, so as to impress them most strongly upon our memory: these, however, like the laws of a people, exhibit in colours too striking to be mistaken, their real genius, character, and disposition.

ⁱ Taylor's Preface.

The military genius of the Romans is never more apparent than in their medals: in the war-like emblems which are constantly to be found upon them: in the frequent representations of harangues to their soldiers: and of rewards for military services. We are convinced by the same means of their extravagant superstition from the frequent proofs of the deification of their emperors, consuls, and magistrates; of the superb temples which were erected to their honour, and the sacrifices which were regularly paid to their memory.

Meanwhile, from the same source we derive a knowledge of many customs of a more private nature: of the ceremonies which accompanied their marriages and funerals^k: of the various sacrifices which they performed in privacy and retirement: a sort of information which deserves all the attention the antiquarian can bestow upon it: for while the greater and more public customs give the general outline of a people, these point out many nicer features in their character, represent their particular inclinations and favourite pursuits, and transport us into the most delightful scenes of domestic life.

Such are the uses of medals when considered as a source of historical information, to which we

^k Taylor, p. 278.

may refer with a reasonable hope of having our doubts cleared up, and with a certainty of not being deceived by those artifices which too often debase the page of history. An advantage so important can not fail to recommend them to our notice, and to point them out as proper objects of learned curiosity. But however we may value them for their application to the useful parts of learning, it is perhaps with increased pleasure that we trace out their use in the more elegant ones: that we observe them aiding our attempts to form that pure taste which can only be acquired by recurring with frequency to the finished models of antiquity, and by habituating our minds to the contemplation of their excellence.

To medals, the admirer of the ancient poets is frequently obliged for supplying him with a critical knowledge of their beauties; a knowledge which seldom fails to impart to him some share of that genuine taste which is the leading feature in their works. The poets of antiquity, indeed, can never be so well illustrated, as by a comparison with their kindred artists: conversant with the same subjects, their great minds frequently fell into the same train of thinking: not only their general style and character correspond, but many of their particular thoughts, many of their nicer elegances are frequently expressed in the same way: from the comparison, therefore,

of their beauties, the result will certainly be reciprocal illustration.

Of the anthologic poets of Greece, many have professedly written in commendation of the works of their contemporary artists: nor have there been wanting those who paid this tribute of praise to medals¹: it would be no unpleasing speculation to compare the poet with the work which he commends: such a comparison would certainly discover new beauties in those elegant compositions; many of which, by the propriety of their sentiments, and the exquisite simplicity of their expressions, convey to us some idea of that correct taste which displays itself in the greater species of Grecian poetry.

It is in this higher poetry, however, that the use of medals is most remarkable: upon them it is easy to trace out the whole system of ancient mythology: the great deities presiding over the universe: the inferior deities of particular countries, cities, and villages: the fabulous heroes, whom the gratitude of the early ages rewarded with divine honours, are all represented with their proper and characteristic attributes: the moral part of mythology also, the virtues and vices, the faculties of the mind, and the affections of the heart, under the same figurative persons which poetry has endowed them with, are all

¹ Spanheim, Dissert. iii. D'Orville Num. Sicul.

reduced to the perception of our senses: every part, in short, of that theory is placed before us, which, under the masterly hand of their best poets, so captivates the fancy, that we feel little inclination to censure it for its glaring absurdities.

To turn, therefore, from the description of a poet, to the reverse of a medal, is to read the same story related in a different language. The advantage which the poet derives from the comparison, is in reality the illustration which poetry receives from its sister art of painting: many beauties are discovered which before were faintly seen, or perhaps not observed at all: the images of the poet receive additional lustre: his conceptions new force and propriety: and the mind of the reader, delighted by discovering the analogy, is prepared for the reception of that particular impression which he wishes to excite.

While the general fictions of that mythology from which the ancient poets derived their imagery are thus displayed upon medals, the same propriety, the same noble simplicity which distinguished their allegories, is faithfully preserved in the emblematic symbols: by help of these symbols many passages of difficult interpretation in the Grecian poets have been happily explained^m: this use, indeed, is in great measure mutual; for

^m See Spanheim's notes upon Callimachus.

many of the symbols upon medals would be little understood, were not the poet at hand to point out their allusion to some abstract philosophical idea, or to some mysterious rite or custom.

The Romans in their better days thought like the Greeks, imitated their mythology, and preserved the beauty of their allegories: what is said of the Grecian poets, therefore, is equally true of them: to the writings of those who lived after the Augustan age, when the spirit of genuine poetry was nearly extinct, the medals of those days have an appropriate application: often, indeed, there is so striking a similarity between them, that it is not difficult to pronounce that the image of the poet has been copied from the medal: and often, when the extravagant vices of a Nero, a Domitian, or a Commodus, were to be commended, the prostituted senate, and the servile poet, have conveyed their flattery under the same formⁿ.

From the poetry of antiquity, it is natural in pursuit of taste, to turn our thoughts to the consideration of the other elegant arts, which are analogous to it in their principles, and always accompanied it in its progress. Medals here assist our inquiries by exhibiting specimens of the works of those great artists, who, in the flourishing days of Greece and Rome, realized

ⁿ Addison on Medals.

in their performances every idea of grace and beauty that the mind can form, and to the revival of whose mutilated remains modern art owes all its excellence.

There cannot, perhaps, be a more certain test of the real state of perfection, to which the fine arts in general have advanced in any country, than the beauty of their medals. The unrivalled elegance of the Greek medals, the propriety of their design, and the spirit of their execution, are sufficient to convince us, that amongst a people who could produce such perfect models in a particular art, every other ornamental art must have flourished in the highest splendour: nor shall we hesitate to pronounce, upon comparing the medals of Rome with those of her provinces, that the arts of the capital had not extended their influence to every part of that vast empire°.

The study of ancient architecture has particular obligations to medals. Many temples and other buildings, of whose exquisite beauty when in their perfect state, the few scattered fragments that remain cannot furnish us with an adequate idea, are represented upon them in their original form: many others also of which no other vestige remains but the fame of their magnificence, are thus rescued from the ravages of time, and the

° Winklemann, *Histoire de l'art de l'antiquité*, vol. ii. p. 265.

mutilations of barbarous conquerors: the nice proportions of their orders, the beautiful simplicity of their ornaments, are all preserved with the minutest accuracy. By observing, therefore, the variety in the buildings of different periods, it were easy to trace the progress of ancient architecture, and to mark by their precise epochs, its gradual improvement and final decay^P.

In the Roman architecture in particular, as represented upon medals, many curious and interesting circumstances are discovered, which are connected with the history of the times. It was the glory of that art in the happier days of the empire to be directed solely to one great object, the public benefit. Porticoes, baths, aqueducts, were calculated alike to promote the splendour of the city, and the happiness of its inhabitants. It is a matter, therefore, highly deserving our attention, to know to whose liberality the public were indebted for these edifices. Medals supply us with this knowledge, for while they exhibit the form of a building, they give us also the name of the person under whose patronage it was erected: they teach us that the best and wisest emperors, esteemed the encouragement of this great art, an object no less deserving their care, than the enlargement of their empire, or the regulation of their civil government.

^P Addison on Medals. Evelyn on Medals.

The specimens of ancient sculpture which appear upon medals, are no less remarkable than those of architecture. We find upon them models of many famous statues, which still continue to be the admiration of every true judge of excellence, and serve to show to what a pitch of perfection the ancients carried this divine art⁹. The Farnese Hercules, the Belvidere Apollo, the Medicean Venus, all of which are represented upon medals, give an air of probability to the conjecture, that other beautiful reverses are copied from statues, which have not shared the fortune of those celebrated productions of antiquity: it is true, every medal is in itself a piece of sculpture, and the best medals, particularly the Grecian, preserve the same noble contour, the same energy of form and expression of character, which we suppose to have distinguished the works of a Myron or a Polycletus.

So true it is that the great idea of beauty, which was so powerfully impressed upon the minds of the ancient sculptors, never deserted them: it was a presiding principle which uniformly pervaded every work that came from their hands: we admire it in their minutest, as much as in their largest performances, in their cameos and intaglios, as well as in their statues: the Rhodian gem, if we may judge from the

⁹ Addison on Medals.

representation of it in the beautiful collection so lately deposited amongst the choicest treasures of this place, describes the contending passions of Laocoon, with that same sedate grandeur of expression which is the great characteristic of the most celebrated statue of antiquity.

The remains of ancient painting are so few and so imperfect, that it is impossible to pronounce with certainty, that medals preserve the copies of particular paintings, as they do the models of particular statues: arguing, however, from the general effect, we may venture to conclude that many beautiful reverses have been copied from antique paintings^r: thus in the representations of games, of sacrifices, of allocutions, when we observe that the principles of the art are strictly adhered to, when we consider the excellence of the design, the variety, and at the same time the justness of the composition, we fondly imagine that we are contemplating the works of a Zeuxis, an Apelles, or a Protogenes.

The testimony of the best modern painters has not been wanting to confirm this supposition. Raphael himself, the greatest admirer and the happiest imitator of antiquity, among other specimens of ancient art, failed not to study medals with particular attention: he well knew, that in some branches of his art he might safely rely upon them as guides: that they contained the

^r Addison on Medals.

choicest treasure of the inventions and thoughts of the ancients: that to imbibe taste at its source, he must continue a settled intercourse with the pure remains of antiquity; and that by collecting and combining them wherever they lay dispersed, he should at once enrich his imagination and strengthen his judgment.

Besides what relates to the principles of the great arts of design, medals have other circumstances which recommend them to the attention of the painter: they represent to him the habits of the ancients, both civil and military, the fashion of their weapons, and other minute specimens of art, which enable him to preserve the costume of his pictures with accuracy, and to give them, like the paintings of Poussin, so thorough an air of antiquity, that no circumstance shall occur to awaken the spectator from his dream, and to remind him of modern times.

This comprehensive view of the several uses to which the genuine medals of antiquity may be directed, is sufficient to vindicate the real importance of those precious relics: to convince men that their value is not estimated by their antiquity alone, however that may create a partiality in their favour, but by their application to the most useful and elegant parts of ancient literature: and that to a mind capable of pursuing such inquiries, they afford an inexhaustible fund of instruction and amusement.

The practice of the modern antiquarian most clearly proves the real utility of medals, and furnishes perhaps their best panegyric: destitute of those faithful guides, he is obliged to have recourse to other materials for that degree of proof which is to establish the credit of historical narration: in search of this evidence he naturally turns his thoughts to those original manuscripts, records, and charters, which existed as present memorials of the events they were intended to perpetuate: with these before him, his mind is entirely thrown back into past ages: he fancies himself an actual witness of the greatest events, and no longer entertains a doubt of their reality.

These valuable records, the delivery of which, from their obscure archives, forms one of the most interesting events in the annals of modern literature, resemble medals no less in the nature of the information to be derived from them, than in its authenticity: to them we are indebted for much knowledge respecting the elementary characters of the earliest modern languages: for many curious circumstances relating to the rise and progress of kingdoms: for several treaties of peace and alliance: and for the decrees of many legislative bodies: by their assistance we can trace out the origin of illustrious families; their genealogies, titles, and connections^s: to

^s Nouveau traité de Diplomatique, vol. i.

these records, in short, every historian must have recourse, who prefers the dignity of historical truth to the arbitrary fictions of romance.

The state of the arts, meanwhile, is easily traced out upon seals, which form so essential a branch of modern antiquities: the seals of our English monarchs represent in the clearest manner, the progress of architecture in this country, and the different taste which has been displayed in its ornaments[†]: many private seals preserve specimens of smaller art in the habits of different orders, in the fashion of ancient armour, in the weapons, and other instruments of war, all of which have this additional recommendation, that they tend ultimately to point out the genius, disposition, and customs of our ancestors, in as lively a manner as the picturesque descriptions of our early poets.

The labours of those great men who have directed these inestimable treasures of learning to the illustration of modern times, with the same ingenuity that medals have been applied to the illustration of antiquity, it is our duty to regard with veneration and gratitude: the work, however, is not completed: they have only pointed out a path in which it is easy for their posterity to follow their steps, and to profit by their examples: many valuable treasures of genuine

[†] Observations on Spenser, p. 194.

medals, many collections of original records, yet furnish ample materials for those who wish to pursue this line of study: nor is encouragement wanting to animate them to the undertaking: happily for true learning the objects of antiquarian pursuit are topics of ridicule only to the ignorant and superficial: a liberal spirit of research is cherished and rewarded: and the toil of patient investigation is submitted to by men of the warmest imagination, and the nicest sensibility of taste.

CHARLES HENRY HALL,
CHRIST CHURCH.

1784.

ON DRAMATIC COMPOSITION.

It is worthy of a liberal mind to inquire into the principles and effect of imitative art, in whatever form it is the subject of human invention ; but the importance of such an inquiry is greatest when the actions of men are the objects of imitation. This will evidently appear, if it be considered that the lessons of morality seldom make of themselves a lasting impression on the mind. The difficulty of forming abstract ideas, concurs with the propensities of nature to counteract the labours of the philosopher. Other means then are to be used to support the cause of virtue and truth. The assistance of those arts must be called in, by which the rules of ethics may be made to assume a more pleasing form, by which the imagination may be captivated, and the affections warmed.

In order to effect so important a design, history and epic poetry are the first to offer themselves as the allies of reason, as they both relate to the actions of men, and both confirm precept

by example. But the superior power of poetical narration is immediately seen upon comparing it with that which is simply historical, and the farther the comparison is extended, the greater does this superiority appear.

Much might be said of the charms of poetry, much of the harmony of numbers, and much of the honour paid to bards and minstrels in rude ages, from which all other learning was excluded. It might be insisted on, that the historian exhibits disgusting truths, when he relates the triumphs of vice and the depressions of virtue: but that the poet assigns to each its due reward; that here a probable, though fictitious concurrence of circumstances is adapted to the inclinations of the mind, there the severity of reason demands a painful submission to reality.

Such, among others, are the advantages which epic poetry possess over history, and so much more effectually does it tend to elevate the sentiments of mankind. But something is still wanting in order completely to attain the object in view. The senses must be appealed to, the primary medium through which all knowledge is conveyed. To supply this defect, which is beyond the reach both of the epic poet and historian, and which weakens their best and noblest exertions, is the appropriated office and characteristic of the drama; since it is the drama alone which adds to recital the force of visible re-

presentation, at the same time preserving whatever is most excellent in both the other arts. With reason, therefore, does Aristotle give the preference to dramatic imitation, as of all others ; most agreeable to nature and the most powerful in effect.

Although many kinds of writing are in some degree dramatic, yet this appellation may be strictly confined to such as admit of theatrical exhibition. Regarded in this point of view, the drama resolves itself into two species ; whose avowed purpose and design it is to show us the image of ourselves reflected by others, to bring our own internal constitution by a sort of magic sensibly before our eyes, to draw aside the veil of deceit, and unfold the nature of man under all the variety of appearance which it is capable of assuming. But this end is attained by means widely different. Comedy has it in view to represent either extravagance or regularity of character, such as belongs to particular persons, or such as may be applied to the generality of mankind. The object of tragedy is to form a course of action which involves either the separate calamities of individuals, or, together with them, others of more public concern.

In the one we contemplate the manners of men, in the other we are interested by their fortune.

Of comedy, the first kind depends chiefly on ridicule, exhibiting a copy of living characters

and manners, in which, as we are familiar with the original, it is easy to discover the correctness of the imitation.

Whenever affectation usurps the place of nature, and a violation is offered to the established laws of propriety, there ensues that sort of voluntary deformity, which is the true object of comic raillery; not being of sufficient importance to attract the notice of the philosopher, nor so criminal as to provoke the bitterness of angry satire.

But it requires a skilful hand to direct the weapons of ridicule. The habits of particular times must be regarded without losing sight of the general properties of nature. Characters viewed at a distance by the public eye must have their features enlarged but not distorted, as on the one hand the resemblance would be too faint to be perceived, on the other it would become caricature from being immoderately heightened. Yet a certain degree of burlesque greatly contributes to the intended effect. Even the appearance of art may be admitted without diminishing the humour of the action, the genius of lively comedy being unreserved, and declaring an intention of exciting us to mirth.

The effect arising from a happy combination of ludicrous circumstances is not confined to a particular age or country, but is of general and extensive influence. Yet though the foundation be solid, it is necessary for the completion of the

superstructure to enter into the passions and prejudices of the spectator. Unless the image of the times be faithfully reflected, the mirror will be regarded as false; and when the interest is lessened, the transition grows easy to indifference. But care is to be taken to separate familiarity from coarseness of manners, and to adopt the phrase of common life without descending to the plainness of the vulgar. It must be also remembered, that humour is nearly allied to buffoonery, and that wit loses its poignancy when it ceases to be delicate. If the understanding be shocked, the avenues to the heart will be closed. So much address does it require to laugh men out of their follies.

This seems to be the design of humorous comedy, which, however it may tend to the convenience of society, is only of a negative kind, rather showing us what ought to be avoided to escape ridicule, than what pursued to entitle us to commendation. That falls within the province of the drama, which consists of grave or sentimental comedy.

Here a new appearance of things takes place. Extravagance gives way to a composed dignity of sentiment and action, in the same manner as the gay amusements of youth are succeeded by the more serious pursuits of maturer age.

We are no longer permitted to divert ourselves with what is strange and peculiar; but the plea-

sure which we are to receive arises from a just and sober painting of character. In this sort of comic imitation an air of decency prevails, resulting from the display of those graceful virtues which add lustre and ornament to the private and sequestered walks of human life. It may be considered as a sign of national refinement when comedy has a moral tendency, and is freed from its original licentiousness.

The taste of the ancients was more correct and chaste when the purity and elegance of Menander succeeded to the coarse though strongly-marked humour of Aristophanes, and when the writings of Plautus were holden in less estimation than those of Terence. But though comedy of the serious kind be distinguished by the absence of extravagance, yet elegant raillery is by no means excluded. Wit has a large field in which its brilliancy may be displayed without having recourse to personal invective. Incidents and situations may be new and striking; the spectator may be kept in all the anxiety of suspense, and the greatest surprise may be caused by an unexpected discovery. A dramatic work formed of such materials by an able artist will always be interesting in the highest degree. The mind receives more satisfaction from the view of symmetry and proportion than from extravagance, however ludicrous and amusing. There are times when humour itself fails to please. Taste is of a

changeable nature, and greatly depends on fashion and caprice. But an appeal to the judgment of reason being founded on the unerring principles of truth will always prevail by its own intrinsic weight. It should seem, then, that the comic muse contributes most to the wisdom and happiness of mankind when she assumes a grave aspect and composed demeanour. But her influence extends no farther than common life. To teach men what they owe to each other as members of the same community, is her greatest glory; this is the end which she endeavours to attain by means equally mild and persuasive.

But a far different prospect is laid open to our view when we turn our eyes from the peaceful scenes of ordinary life to the sublime and awful representations of tragedy. Whatever can shake the soul with terror or dissolve it with pity is then the object of our regard. We are to behold the conflict of deadly passions, to become familiar with misery, and to take an interest in all the calamities incidental to mankind. On one side Virtue presents herself in her most solemn and majestic form; on the other, a hideous train of vices issue forth from the regions of horror and desolation. From such sources are derived the subjects of tragedy. All around is elevated and grand. Every one must acknowledge how arduous a task it is to lead the mind captive, as it were, by enchantment, to dive into the recesses

of the human heart, and to unlock the gloomy springs of wretchedness and woe.

Unless the action of tragedy be affecting as well as grand, unless we feel strongly the subject of the exhibition, the effect will be lost, notwithstanding the sublimity of thought with which it may abound, the pomp of diction, or the most rigid observance of dramatic rules. But in order that sentiments of compassion should be really tragic, it is necessary that they should arise from extraordinary causes. We are naturally inclined to admire whatever is great and noble. On this account the characters of tragedy are represented of a superior degree to the rest of mankind, though not without the common marks of humanity; for the true heroic never exceeds probability, however far it may soar above the ordinary level.

The first step to prevent men from being the slaves of passion, is to make them well acquainted with its nature and consequences. These are therefore shown as they really exist. But the emotions of the actor excite others of a different kind in the spectator. The efforts of heroism command admiration, grief raises pity, and villany is seen with indignation. The several departments of the drama being distinguished rather by the sentiments which they produce than those which they contain.

The most perfect compositions of the Greek

tragedians are founded on the misfortunes of single families. Those great masters well knew how worthy it is of the dignity of tragedy, to represent the private deportment of illustrious persons in the midst of calamities originating from wonderful and unforeseen causes. The tragic muse wears with propriety a domestic dress, provided it does not approach too near to modern times. It is more easy to inspire us with respect for persons known to us only from history, than for those who have lived so near our own age, that the memory of them is preserved by recent tradition. If the actions of men be examined by the jealous eyes of their contemporaries, they fail to command that veneration required for tragic exhibition. The poet might himself omit every thing tending to lessen the admiration of his hero, but he could not efface from the mind of the spectator impressions already formed, either from personal observation or the living authority of others. But besides the dignity to be annexed to tragic characters, it seems also necessary that their misfortunes should be undeserved. It is well remarked by the great father of criticism that the story of *Œdipus* is highly proper for tragedy, as he is ignorantly the cause of his own misery. There would be little tragic in the punishment of voluntary crimes. The spectator would rather rejoice than feel compassion when he beheld the avenging arm of justice overtake

an incestuous parricide. Every passion which tragedy can raise, is felt at the sight of unmerited wretchedness, when it relates only to individuals: the same arts of composition are used in subjects of this kind, as in those of more general concern: the same arrangement of parts, and the same regard to the laws of the drama. To both also it belongs to delineate the manners of the times from which the fable is drawn. Comedy shows the image of manners coeval with the writer; but in tragedy, frequent reference is made to the religion, laws, and established customs of antiquity. From hence the probability of the action is increased by having particular marks of originality; the more express these are, the less, of course, is the appearance of fiction. But as the subjects of the drama increase in importance, the stronger are the agitations in the mind of the spectator. When, therefore, tragedy changes the scene, and rises from the imitation of partial to that of general distress, it seems to have arrived at the highest point of the dramatic art. The shock of contending nations and the convulsions of empires afford subjects for an action of the most dignified nature. Such an exhibition contains an appeal to the common passions of mankind; but the spectator is particularly interested when the fable is taken from those passages of history which relate to his own country, in which his ancestors have borne a part, and the consequences of which

are still felt by himself. Here it is unnecessary to labour for the establishment of probability; it is only required to copy historical relation. If the catastrophe be consonant to received opinion, the plot may be managed at the discretion of the poet. Feigned characters and events may be interwoven with the thread of history, and all the contrivances of artful composition may be adopted, if they be well concealed; the principles of the conduct of tragedy being the same in every instance, although the subjects of it may produce different degrees of passion, according as they are of a particular or general import. As the principles are the same, so also is the grand scope and design of tragedy. We have seen, indeed, that the true end of all dramatic imitation is to correct whatever is faulty and vicious in our nature, the variation in the several species of the art consisting in the means by which that end is accomplished.

It becomes, then, a most important question, after what examples the drama is to be composed? The standard of perfection in this as in other arts is only to be attained by following the steps of the ancients. True taste must be formed on the models which they have left us. Notwithstanding the difference between ancient and modern times, good sense remains fixed and invariable. It would be foreign to the present purpose to enter into a discussion whether the

modern drama regulated by the example of the Greek or Roman theatre would be well received by a spectator of the present age. This must be referred to the decision of learned authority. It is sufficient for the dramatic writer to imbibe the genuine simplicity and energy of antiquity from the precious remains of the ancient drama. When these fundamental principles are gained, the rest may be accommodated to the habits and modes of thinking of particular times; the latter being fluctuating and uncertain, but the former established on the immutable basis of nature and truth.

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ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF SATIRE.

SEMPER HÆC INGENIIS LIBERTAS PERMISSA FUIT, UT SALIBUS LUDERENT IMPUNE, MODO NE LICENTIA EXIRET IN RABIEM. ERASMUS.

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ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF SATIRE.

IN the early ages of nations, as in the youth of individuals, before the authority of the judgment is confirmed by the establishment of acknowledged truths, the passions are ever the most powerful springs of human action. To inflame, appease, or direct them, is the first office of poetic composition, which possesses in its rudest state a strong and extensive influence; since the pride of human nature, always wakeful and jealous, is roused by every approach of praise or censure. Thus, while the love of glory is inspired on the one hand by encomiastic songs, the reward of heroism and valour; the fear of shame is nourished on the other by sarcasm and ridicule, the punishment of treachery and cowardice. With the progress of refinement and luxury, panegyric poetry either languishes and disappears, or is forced to derive its subjects from the exploits of distant times. But the variety and caprice of artificial manners, with the consequent deviations from consistency and nature, multiply

the objects of ridicule, and thus by perpetual exercise, improve and perfect the satiric muse.

In this advancement toward perfection, the forms of Satire are varied as its extent is enlarged, through all the numerous modes of invective and ridicule. The force of invective is confined within a narrow compass; it may deter or punish, but will seldom correct or improve; nor can it justly be employed, except against the greater vices, which demand the indignation of mankind. The powers of ridicule are more extensive and various; through fear of that contempt, which its louder tones are capable of awakening, it alarms and represses the licentiousness of folly; and by the cheerfulness and urbanity of its milder accents, it attracts the heart, and secures the attention, while it infuses truth into the mind, and exposes the absurdity of falsehood.

The prevalence of satiric composition is also farther promoted by the gratification that it offers to our natural love of superiority, which always looks on with conscious triumph, while the errors of others are detected and chastised. By the skill and address of the satirist, this invidious principle may be converted into the means of improvement, and while all listen to the reproof of others, all may be insensibly reformed. Difficult, however, and dangerous is this office; and as the advantages of satire are numerous and

great, its abuses also are striking and important. If the poet suffer his own reason to be overcome, and himself to be hurried on to the violation of justice by the impetuosity of an unguided fancy, the judgment of others may be dazzled by the brilliancy of his wit, and error be admitted for truth. If malice or immorality point the arrows of ridicule, a severe and fatal wound may be given to innocence or to virtue.

There can be few subjects, therefore, more interesting than an examination of the sources from which such different effects are derived, and of the degree of merit due to those compositions, which in nations, where the spirit of censure is not suppressed by the authority of the government, are both so numerous and so popular : for there is no care or employment of humanity to which satire does not extend her influence, while she assumes the important characters of the avenger of personal misconduct, the judge of political errors, the guardian of morality, and the guide of taste.

I. 1. To stigmatize the names of those persons whose vices or follies, either immediately by their effects, or more remotely by their example, are injurious to the happiness of society, is an action both just and patriotic. The instructions of the moralist and the critic would be too often neglected or despised, if there were no executive power, which might punish the violation of their

laws. History, indeed, by delivering down the vicious to perpetual infamy, presents the noblest lesson of morality: but beside that it comprehends only the more important actions, it is rather a caution against future, than a remedy of present evils: whereas, by the judicious application of personal reproof the contagion of folly may be prevented, although the infection, perhaps, cannot be removed. Even in circumstances influenced by the opinions of posterity, vice may sometimes despise the appeal, or vanity may hope that the decision will be favourable; but the attacks of present scorn subdue pride and defeat stratagem, and by a punishment, which no one can escape, hold forth a warning, to which all must submit. At the period of Grecian history, when the union of the imagination and the passions, little restrained by philosophy or law, was raised to an height unknown in almost every other country; lyrical invective appears sometimes to have supplied the deficiencies of an unsettled legislature. Personal sarcasm is also mentioned among those compositions, that were sung at the entertainments of more refined ages to nourish the spirit of valour and of freedom. The unrestrained liberty of the old comedy, which introduced living characters upon the stage under their real names and with the addition of a representative mask, appears to the refinement of modern manners to be the excess of licentious-

ness and outrage: yet it must be allowed to have been not ill adapted to the jealous and turbulent spirit of the Athenian democracy; and while the comic poets confined their representations to the attack of ignorance and vice, they might be ranked in the first class of public benefactors.

The freedom of personal attack, that distinguished the Grecian comedy, was characteristic also of the elder Roman satire; which being different in form, although the same in spirit, obtained the praise of originality, when cultivated by Lucilius with so much justice and success. The frequent^a panegyric harangues in the city as well as in the camp, instituted, by a policy almost peculiar to the Roman state, to kindle the flame of patriotism and virtue, would derive new force from this opposite example of personal censure by public recital, which exposing the vicious to contempt or infamy, completed the measure of judicial retribution. And while the novelties of luxury, and the variations of character introduced by foreign conquest, afforded copious materials for the exercise of personal ridicule, its boldness found ample support in that spirit of equality which permitted, on certain occasions, an almost boundless liberty of censure to the soldier^b against his general, and the slave against his lord.

^a Polyb. lib. 6. p. 495. ed. Casaub.

^b Δηλοῦσι δὲ αἱ τῶν θριάμβων εἰσοδοὶ παλαιὰν καὶ ἐπιχώριαν

The long series of domestic wars that followed in the Roman state, was little favourable to the cultivation of satire; and at the establishment of a refined and absolute sovereign, the bold air of its first author was exchanged for the delicate pleasantry and artful address that have made the writings of Horace the perpetual object of imitation and applause. Yet even to works of this general tendency, the occasional introduction of known characters gives peculiar force, as they both interest the passions by their familiarity, and convince the judgment by their truth.

Personal satire has also been successfully directed in all countries against the vain pretenders to genius and learning, who, if they were not rendered contemptible by ridicule, would too often attract the attention, and corrupt the taste of their age. By employing irony the most artful, and wit the most acute, against the unnatural and insipid, among his contemporaries, Boileau drew the affections and judgment of his nation to the chaste and interesting productions of Molière and Racine.

I. 2. Such have been the advantages derived from personal satire^c; but so great on the con-

οὔσαν Ῥωμαίους τὴν κέρτομον καὶ σατυρικὴν παιδίαν. Ἐφείται γὰρ τοῖς καταγάγουσι τίς νίκας, ἰαμβίζειν τὲ καὶ κατασκώπτειν τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους ἄνδρας, καὶ αὐτοὺς τοὺς στρατηλάτας.
Dion. Halic. lib. vii. p. 560. ed. Hudson.

^c Hor. Epist. ad Aug. 150. Art. Poet. 281. Blackstone's Com. vol. iv. p. 150.

trary are the injuries resulting from its misapplication, that the legislature of all nations has been exerted to restrain it. For if they, whose failings were unknown and harmless, be brought forth at once to notice and shame, or if, for the weakness common to human nature, illustrious characters be made objects of contempt, the triumphs of vice are promoted by increasing the number of the vicious, and virtue loses much of its dignity and force, by being deprived of those names which had contributed to its support. Not less injurious to science is the unjust censure of literary merit, which tends both to damp the ardour of genius, and to mislead the public taste. The most striking examples of the abuse of personal satire are furnished by that nation in which its freedom was the greatest. The theatres of Athens once endured to behold the wisest of her philosophers, and the most virtuous of her poets, derided with all the grossness of malicious scurrility. Nor has modern poetry been altogether free from this disgrace. Fortunate, however, it is, that although the judgment of the weak may be for a time misguided, truth will in the end prevail: the respect and admiration due to the names of Burnet and of Bentley, of Warburton and of Johnson, are now no longer lessened by the wit of Swift, or the asperity of Churchill.

Even where the subject or design is not im-

properly chosen, abuse may still arise from the disposition and colouring of the piece. When bitterness and severity are employed against men whose failings were venial and light, or ridicule degenerates either into the broad attacks of sarcastic buffoonery, or the unmanly treachery of dark hints and poisonous allusions, not only the particular punishment is excessive and unjust, but also general malice is fostered by new supplies of slander.

But the abuses of personal satire are then most numerous and great, when it is dictated by private animosity. Beside the impropriety in the subjects of the *Dunciad*, many of the situations in which they are placed, might be censured as uncharacteristic, if the mind were not sometimes averted from the contemplation of them, and criticism prevented by disgust. There are, indeed, few circumstances that awaken such poignant regret, as the severe and rancorous invectives which some of the first names in literature have vented against their enemies. When envious dullness traduces the excellence to which it cannot attain; or rash impetuosity bursts forth to a general attack on all surrounding merit, we turn away from the sight with contempt or indignation: but to behold that wit and genius which had been employed to the fairest ends, unhappily degraded to the meanest of all offices, the gratification of malice and revenge, is at once

humiliating to the judgment, and painful to the heart.

II. 1. Nor has satire been confined to the conduct of individuals alone, but has been pointed also against those measures of policy and state, in which the interest of whole nations is concerned. It is only by the exercise of political satire, that the spirit of jealousy necessary to the support of all mixed governments can be excited, and the general establishment of the constitution protected and maintained. The frequency also of those occasional errors to which the administration of every state is subject, will be diminished by the fear of that ridicule which is able both to repel the attacks of violence, and expose the artifices of faction. So intimately, however, is the freedom of political satire connected with the establishment of general liberty, that popular outrage is not less unfavourable to its existence than the extremity of absolute despotism. During the violence of contending factions that preceded the subversion of the Roman commonwealth, it appears to have been almost entirely unknown: the efforts of wit must, indeed, have been feeble and disregarded, at a period when literature had not obtained an universal esteem, and in a nation where the eloquence of the orator was at one time drowned by a sedition, at another time overawed by the sword.

The history of free nations exhibits frequent

examples of the application of ridicule to the concerns of state, many of which were useful to their own age, and all may be instructive to posterity ^d. The political comedies of Aristophanes present a picture of his nation, too minute to be suspected of falsehood, and too interesting to be viewed without pain. In them we behold the representation of a people, at once refined and gross, learned and infatuated; so fond of humour and ridicule as to permit the boldest attacks upon their favourite follies, yet so deluded as neither to resign nor correct them; attentive to wit and satire, yet prosecuting, in defiance of both, a war, that could not but end in their destruction.

By the invention of the art of printing, the dissemination of political satire has been eminently facilitated, and in our own country it possesses an importance as little known to the surrounding nations, as the peculiar privilege by which its freedom is secured ^e. The establishment of our excellent constitution was considered as imperfect, while restraint was imposed upon the exertion of any voice by which the spirit of liberty might be awakened. And since the noblest security against sudden and causeless

^d Brumoy's Greek Theatre. General conclusion.

^e De Lolme, book ii. chap. xii. xiii. On the Liberty of the Press.

revolutions, is that opportunity of calm decision, which is presented to the judgment of a whole country by the free representation of all public events; political satire tends, in a no less powerful degree to secure the government from rebellion, than to protect the people from oppression. Nor are instances wanting of its exercise, which will ever be contemplated with admiration and triumph. The remains of that fanaticism, which was a reproach to the human character, were dissipated by the wit of Butler; and the delicate pleasantry of Addison was successfully employed in the support of justice and of freedom, at the moment of delusion and danger.

II. 2. Yet while the heart of the patriot glows with rapture at the survey of that constitution, which allows to every subject the noblest of all privileges; the most painful sensations will often be excited by a view of the licentiousness interwoven with so fair a system. Instead of the manly ardour of truth and freedom, satire is too often taught to breathe the furious and baneful spirit of falsehood or sedition^f. Even the dignity of that supreme authority which is rendered sacred no less by the peculiar genius of our constitution than by every principle of general policy, has sometimes been exposed to attacks of ridicule equally mean in their form, and pernicious in

^f Blackstone's Comm. vol. i. p. 241 ; vol. iv. p. 173.

their tendency. And by the extensive diffusion of political calumny, a spirit of animosity has occasionally been excited, so powerful as to interrupt the national harmony, and imbitter the intercourse of domestic life.

Moved, perhaps, by these considerations^g, Swift, who had himself been employed on some occasions as the support of a party, and acting on others from a more enlarged principle, had been hailed as the vindicator of a devoted people, attempted, in a relation of fictitious adventures, to stop, by the powers of ridicule, that torrent of faction which was at once so impetuous and destructive. Happy would it have been, if the execution had corresponded with the design. But while he exposes the arts and constitution of his country to contempt, and represents its whole history as a series of actions disgraceful to human nature, the only political tendency of the most singular production of genius, is to relax the vigour of patriotism, and sink the spirits into despondence and inactivity.

III. 1. From this view of personal and political satire, the mind is naturally carried to the contemplation of more general and abstract productions. Of such compositions, the first in consideration and importance, are those that

^g Voyage to Lilliput, chap. iv ; to Brobdingnag, chap. 6, 7 ; to Laputa, chap. 8.

affect morality. With the accuracy of philosophical truth, with the beauty of reason, or the dignity of virtue, the weak, the gay, and the profligate, will be little moved; but deformity of every kind, when exhibited in its native shape, seldom fails to strike the senses, and rouse the heart to contempt or aversion.

One of the most important objects, therefore, of moral satire, is to render those opinions contemptible by ridicule, of which the falsehood may be evinced by argument. There is a darkness that sometimes overspreads the human mind, which is more easily dissipated by the bright flashes of wit, than by the clear though steady light of reason; for the force of habit can seldom be vanquished, till new passions are roused in opposition to prevailing affections, and prejudice is subdued by shame. The progress of manners among the nations of modern Europe affords striking examples of the success of comic satire^h. The cloud of errors with which mankind had so long been oppressed, was first penetrated by the wit of Erasmus; the pleasantry of whose irony prepared the mind for the reception of those just ideas that have since been made the basis of religious institutions. Still more

^h *Moriæ Encomium*. Particularly the conclusion. Of the *Colloquies*; *Virgo Μισόγαμος Abbas et Euridita*; et *Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo*. Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, vol. i. p. 113.

extensively successful was the original and unrivalled humour of Cervantesⁱ. No sooner had his extraordinary satire appeared, than the romantic fabric of pernicious enthusiasm that had been raised upon the ruins of ancient chivalry, faded away before it, like the works of its own enchanters, when approached by the spirits of light. It is also principally by the powers of comic satire, that the dark and tremendous illusions, generated by the gloomy spirit of northern superstition, have gradually been expelled; that the absurdity of extravagant systems or visionary mysteries has been detected and discountenanced; and the judgment of mankind enlightened by the influence of reason and of truth. Even the first principle and foundation of all morality has sometimes been protected by the exertions of wit^k. In the Argument against abolishing Christianity, the irony of Swift is happily employed in exposing the madness of scepticism and infidelity.

But satire has been more frequently exerted against those common follies by which domestic life is rendered uneasy, and the happiness of society disturbed. To chastise the numerous absurdities of vanity and caprice, protected by their minuteness from the severity of philosophic disquisition, has ever been the favourite object of

ⁱ Beattie on Fable and Romance, p. 562.

^k Johnson's Life of Swift, vol. iii. p. 393.

comedy: but the peculiar nature of dramatic representation, leaves ample room for those shorter essays of wit which are the most popular compositions of every people, and are so eminently adapted to the conveyance of general instruction. This end is perhaps nowhere more happily pursued than in the writings of Horace; but the period of Roman refinement was short and transitory; and the superiority of modern nations in all the elegancies of morality has been received in a great degree through the medium of those satirical productions with which all of them abound¹. This nation in particular will always recur with gratitude to the fortunate period in which propriety and elegance of manners were so successfully inculcated by the humour of Addison and Steele^m. And since to the happiness of original invention, to the warmth of fancy, and the brightness of wit, that characterize the Rape of the Lock, a most refined and delicate moral is everywhere united, this beautiful poem may justly be considered as one of the most useful productions of the satiric muse. By such compositions the judgment is improved, while the heart is softened; and a ray of cheerfulness is cast over the imagination, that brightens all the prospects of humanity.

¹ Johnson's Life of Addison, vol. ii. p. 350.

^m Johnson's life of Pope, vol. iv. p. 189.

A bolder air of ridicule, and higher colouring, must also be sometimes adopted to exhibit in their native deformity the more dangerous illusions of folly, which attract by the appearance of imaginary delight. In this mode of satire the comic genius of our country has been eminently distinguished. By the author of the *Universal Passion*, the greatest acuteness of wit is joined with the utmost purity of sentiment, in rendering contemptible all those varieties of character that are assumed by vanity, from the expectation of importanceⁿ. And the accurate pictures of destructive follies, delineated by the pencil of Hogarth (where poignancy of ridicule is so happily improved by the interesting form of dramatic exhibition), afford the most striking and powerful incitements to virtue and to truth.

To guard the heart from vice our fears are to be alarmed, or our passions inflamed; and the pleasantry of wit and humour exchanged for sarcasm and invective. Modern nations are not without examples of this severer satire, which the moralist will regard with approbation. Its perfection, however, must be sought in the compositions of the illustrious Roman, who, living in an age the most corrupt that history records, attacked the degeneracy of his countrymen with that manly warmth of contemptuous indignation which was

ⁿ Walpole's Anecdotes. Gilpin on Prints.

suited to the enormity of their crimes. In a state of manners so universally depraved, the censure even of Juvenal was perhaps ineffectual and vain. But the modern reader, who turns from the dark picture with trembling and abhorrence, while he congratulates himself on the happy improvements in morality, which seem to assure him that some parts of the description will never again exist, cannot fail to guard with jealous attention against the approach of other vices by which human nature may at all times be overcome.

III. 2. In proportion, however, as the effects of general satire are powerful and extensive, its misapplication is peculiarly injurious to morality°. Error must almost unavoidably be produced, whenever ridicule, instead of being employed to expose falsehood, shall be adopted as the test of truth. It is the characteristic quality of ridicule to compose images of absurdity and extravagance by the unexpected union of dissimilar ideas. Hence arises an opportunity of much fallacious sophistry: for by a constrained association of incongruous parts, or an unnatural distortion of consistent ones, the fairest and best proportioned object may be made to appear irregular and deformed. Weak, indeed, must be the cause of the philosopher who is forced to appeal to the

° Browne's Essay on Ridicule, in answer to Shaftesbury on the Freedom of Wit and Humour.

passions or the fancy, in cases where the judgment alone is able to decide. But it is melancholy to reflect, that falsehood and irreligion should sometimes have been imbibed from those satirical productions, of which the meanness ought to have been regarded with contempt, and the malice with detestation. Indeed, ridicule can seldom be applied to religious speculations without danger to morality, however pious may be the intention of the satire; since the mind is thereby taught to regard those subjects with levity which ought only to be contemplated with awful veneration.

But speculative morality is examined by few; and satire is therefore more extensively pernicious, when it is improperly directed against the actions and conduct of life. By the petulance of spleen, or the partiality of bigotry, the whole body of a society, profession, sex, and even nation, has sometimes been treated as a single individual, and involved in general and undiscerning obloquy. The tendency of such calumnies is to contract alike the judgment and the affections, and thus to limit the influence not only of truth and reason, but also of benevolence and humanity. Satire is also improperly exercised by those authors who moved by some particular examples of vice, from which no period is free, represent the general state of manners as eminently debased, and declaim against the corruption and

depravity of their times ^p. When it is considered that such representations have prevailed at every period in the progress of manners, from ages of rudeness to those of civilization and refinement, they may not unjustly be supposed to proceed rather from envious or undiscerning partiality, than from rational and honest indignation. And their tendency is eminently pernicious. Vice will always derive encouragement from the popularity which exempts it from shame, and the activity of virtue will be relaxed by the removal of its most powerful incentive, the hope of approbation and reward. Still more pernicious are those compositions in which human nature is made an object of reproach, and the passions, opinions, and actions of man, are held forth to contempt and abhorrence. It is painful to mark the errors of genius; yet the same work of Swift, which has already been considered as erroneous in a political view, is liable to still greater objections in its relation to morality; and Boileau's *Satire on Man* cannot but be regarded as no less injurious to virtue, than inconsistent with the general humanity of its author. By reflecting upon the dignity of human nature we are elevated to sublimity, and by contemplating its virtues we are softened to benevolence; but when man is beheld in a state of folly or debasement, the soul

^p Harris's *Philological Inquiries*. Concluding chapter.

feels an involuntary depression, and sinks into meanness on misanthropy.

IV. 1. Similar to the influence of comic satire upon morality, is its connection also with taste. Critical as well as moral truth can seldom be perfectly established, unless the absurdity of error be exposed by ridicule. To develop the latent arts of composition, and, by proving their conformity with the principles of human nature, to erect taste on the basis of science, is the work of philosophy alone. But scientific arrangements are little calculated for general use : while, therefore, the rhetorician exerts his eloquence to ravish and transport the mind, by displaying the successful efforts of genius, the satirist, on the contrary, employs his wit to detect errors and discountenance absurdities, and thus provoke his audience to aversion or contempt. And since false opinions must necessarily be extirpated before just ideas can be introduced, satirical criticism will always, in point of popular instruction at least, be prior to philosophic. The turgid, the gross, and the unnatural, must be despised, before the sublime, the witty, or the beautiful, can be truly relished. So that while satire appears to be confined to the lower objects of criticism, it contributes in an eminent degree to the promotion of the highest : and prepares the understanding for those refined and elevated sensations which the perfect comprehension of

excellence can alone produce. The critical satires of Horace, although composed with a view to the particular situation of his country, contain so many general principles of philology, so happily illustrated, that from them modern nations imbibed the first tincture of correct and elegant taste. Nor can the true and natural beauties of composition ever cease to be relished, so long as regard be paid either to these genuine effusions of wit, or to their happy imitations and improvements in the writings of Boileau and Pope. In a field so ample and interesting as taste, comic satire may be supposed to have exerted itself with peculiar felicity; and accordingly we find, that neither the insinuating pleasantry of Erasmus^q, nor the lively wit of Hall^r, neither the cheerful humour of Addison^s, nor the more severe irony of Swift^t, are at any time so happily employed, as in exposing those literary errors by which the dictates of nature are violated, and the forms of composition are disgraced. The perfection, indeed, as well as the true relish of every imitative art, has been promoted by the exertions of wit; for everything that either falls below or exceeds the majestic simplicity of nature, whether it arise from the deficiency or perversion of genius, is the proper

^q Ciceronianus.^r Hall's Satires, B. i.; B. 2. Sat. i.; B. 6.^s Essays on Wit.^t Treatise on the Art of Sinking.

object of satirical criticism. To it, one art in particular, the peculiar boast of this country, is eminently indebted. The quaint and unnatural affectation that had corrupted the genuine beauties of rural scenery was exploded by the ridicule of Pope^u; and the national attention thus happily directed to the chaste and elegant designs of Kent, Burlington, and Browne.

If we descend to the minute particularities of domestic elegance, which, though of little independent consequence, are yet rendered interesting by their connection with more important concerns, we shall here find satire perpetually employed with advantage and success. The efforts of ridicule co-operated, in a powerful degree, with the gradual progress of taste, in diffusing that general air of delicacy by which the enjoyments of social life have been extended and refined. Even after the general principles of taste have been established in any country, caprice and affectation would introduce perpetual corruptions, were ridicule not employed to withstand their attempts.

The abstruse severity of the sciences, which must always depend upon the understanding alone, and can derive little aid from the passions or the imagination, naturally excludes satire from any immediate share in their promotion. Yet

^u Guardian, No. 173 ; and Epistle to the earl of Burlington.

ridicule may be considered as advantageously employed, when it has contributed to disgrace the frivolous pretensions that have sometimes dignified themselves with the name of science, and laid claim to its honours and rewards.

IV. 2. In its relation, however, to scientific pursuits, satire, instead of confining itself to the vain and superficial, has too often attacked the useful and profound. The researches of the antiquarian and the philosopher, have been represented as the labours of dullness, to which sense or genius could never condescend. It is impossible to consider without indignation, that at the first institution of that society, which has contributed so much to the promotion of philosophy and the advancement of our national honour, all the powers of wit and satire were employed to insult and debase it. But the attempt degraded only its authors: and so extensive has been the diffusion of literary intercourse, that few remains of this contracted spirit can now be found.

By the same vain and undiscerning petulance the labours of the grammarian and the critic have been derided, and all the more severe and abstruse parts of literature have been condemned as useless or absurd. The immediate operation of such censure furnishes indolence with excuse, and folly with encouragement; and if it were capable of any permanent and remote effect, it

must infallibly destroy that elegance which it pretends to establish. The embellishments of learning can only subsist while its strength and vigour are maintained; if the support of reason and philosophy be withdrawn, national taste must soon sink from its purity, and relapse into extravagance and barbarism.

Even the divine effusions of genius and imagination have sometimes been attacked, and ridicule has been employed to debase the lofty, or vilify the noble. Of such satire, however, as it can only proceed from the utmost perversion of taste, and has always been received with indignation, the instances have been rare, and the attempts altogether fruitless^x. The attack made by Perrault upon the chaste productions of antiquity, is remembered only as an object of contempt.

From this general representation of the good and ill effects of satire, we may be enabled to form a comparison of their respective importance. By the improper exercise of satire, individuals have sometimes been exposed to undeserved contempt; nations have been inspired with unjustifiable animosity; immoral sentiments have been infused; and false taste has received encouragement and support. On the contrary, by the just exertions of satire, personal licentiousness has

^x Boileau's *Reflections on Longinus*.

frequently been restrained; the establishments of kingdoms have been supported; and the precepts of morality and taste conveyed in a form the most alluring and efficacious! The success, however, of all those productions that have not been directed by virtue and justice, has been confined and transient, whatever genius or talents might be employed in their composition: by the wise among their contemporaries they have been disregarded, and in the following age they have sunk into oblivion. But the effusions of wit united with truth, have been received with universal approbation, and preserved with perpetual esteem: their influence has been extended over nations and prolonged through ages. Hence, perhaps, we need not hesitate to conclude, that the benefits derived from satire are far superior to the disadvantages, with regard both to their extent and duration: and its authors, may, therefore, deservedly be numbered among the happiest instructors of mankind.

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IN WHAT ARTS HAVE THE MODERNS EXCELLED THE ANCIENTS?

THE curiosity of every man, from the first exercise of his thinking powers, is warmly excited to know the origin from whence he sprung, and the different stages by which he arrived at that state of maturity, in which he at present beholds himself. And this investigation is not confined to his own career as an individual; but as a member of the collective body of mankind, he feels an interest in all the accidents and revolutions which have taken place among the several nations of the world, from the earliest and most remote ages to the period in which he lives. The general detail of events and actions in peace or war, forms the common object of historical research. To more philosophic observers it has ever been a favourite pursuit to contemplate man in his advances towards refinement, and to trace the progress of those arts from which human life derives its best ornament and support.

But this study then becomes most interesting, when we view the arts in their highest state of excellence among those nations of antiquity, whose language and government now no longer exist, and who are known to us only by the memorials which they have left us. The great characters of those times then stand forth as rivals to modern ages: we insensibly form a comparison of their respective merit; and are led to inquire, what degree of improvement has been imparted by the genius and industry of the latter to the various branches of useful and ornamental art. We consider ourselves also as nearly concerned for the honour of our own times; and while we establish a superiority in any respect, a secret pride is perhaps indulged, like the feelings of maturer age, when it looks down on the inexperience of youth.

In surveying the history of the human mind, we are struck with the early and superior eminence, which the works of imagination and taste have attained over those of reason and the understanding. The former appear to resemble the great source which produces them: active and vigorous in their progress, and soon arriving at a degree of perfection, beyond which no advances can be made. The very reverse may be observed with regard to science, which, as it proceeds with cautiousness and deliberation, and has for its object the unlimited series of causes and

effects, is slow and regular in its course, and seems ever capable of increasing excellence, as the experience of ages is united in its behalf.

Though we may reasonably suppose the arts to have been originally cultivated in Egypt, and the other countries of the east, the examples of them in their maturity are chiefly to be sought for among the inhabitants of ancient Greece. In examining the monuments of art, the first object that engages our attention, is the literature of this people. The temperature of their climate, the copious and unexhausted beauties of nature, and the favourable state of their manners and government, assisted by an uncommon dignity and sweetness of language, contributed to raise the arts of composition among the Greeks to the highest point of excellence. Their sublime spirit was transfused into the works of their successful imitators, the Romans, who, uniting a purity and elegance of their own with the wilder effusions of their masters, produced the most perfect models of correct writing. Without denying, therefore, the full merit of originality to the literary productions of later times, the claim of antiquity must still remain undisputed in the higher species of poetical and prose composition. It cannot, however, be imagined that so many ages have elapsed without suggesting some improvement. The history of the drama furnishes evidence to the truth of this remark. The inconveniencies

of the ancient chorus^a, which by its continuance on the stage during the whole of the action, embarrassed and confined the conduct, and weakened the probability of dramatic representation, have been happily removed on the modern theatre. At the same time in the number and diversity of her subjects^b, and the affecting intricacy of her plots, tragedy has opened new sources of delight, and usurped a more powerful ascendancy over the passions of mankind.

As the general appearances of nature, and the great emotions of the mind, which are usually the objects of serious description, remain the same in all ages and countries, the first imitators must be allowed to possess an advantage in the copies which they have taken from them. It is different with those delineations which are drawn from the variable complexion of human manners. Hence in ludicrous composition the superiority is evidently on the side of the moderns. The state of government in the latter centuries, the familiar intercourse of nations established by commerce, and the extensive diffusion of learning, have contributed largely to this purpose^c; since they exhibit mankind in a greater variety of situations, and furnish a more copious store of images,

^a Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric, etc. lect. xlv.

^b Idem, lect. xxxv.

^c Beattie on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition, chap. 4.

which, by an unexpected combination or opposition, form the best materials of comic ridicule. Comedy, therefore, as her acquaintance with the world is improved, and the circle of her observation enlarged, charms with a continued novelty: and though she sometimes degenerates into a criminal licentiousness, in many of her performances she has united the most brilliant sallies of wit with the purest and most refined sentiment.

Various are the forms which ridicule has assumed among the moderns, as the vices or foibles of the age seemed to call for correction. The martial spirit of adventure, which arose under the feudal system of government in Europe, as it was insensibly degraded by the extravagances of romance, produced a new species of satirical composition in the inimitable work of Cervantes. This example was followed by Butler in our own country, who, applying the images of chivalry to the infatuated zeal of puritans in his times, drew a portrait of the most preposterous absurdity, and added an original fund of wit, and exquisiteness of allusion, that will ever remain unequalled. In the specimens of novel writing, carried to such perfection by Le Sage and Fielding, the ignorance and folly of persons in public professions, and the singularities of character in private life, are exhibited to our view in the liveliest colours of ridicule, and satirized with the most delicate humour. Besides this, the masterly

conduct of the story, and the interesting train of events contained in these compositions, conspire to place them in the highest rank among the productions of the comic muse^d.

In the arts of design, where the conceptions of poetry are realized to the senses, it is in vain to expect any superiority from the genius of later times. Since the revival of taste, the rules of architecture have been professedly formed on the models of antiquity^e; not so much with the hope of exceeding its noble specimens, but with the more modest aim of expressing as many of its excellences as possible. To the ruined edifices of the Romans we are chiefly indebted for the present correctness and simplicity in the proportions and the decorations of our architecture. Their temples, theatres, baths, arches, and columns, have not only been admired, but studied with the minutest attention^f; and we may venture to pronounce that, from the comparison of these magnificent remains, modern architects were impressed with the great idea of beauty, which presents itself in the palace of the Louvre, and the church of St. Peter at Rome.

The style of architecture, which was introduced by our ancestors in the early ages of Europe, and

^d Beattie, *ubi supra*.

^e Wren's *Parentalia*, p. 282. 354.

^f Desgodetz, *Les Edifices antiques de Rome*, préface. Palladio's *Architecture*.

continued till within the last two centuries^g, is now regarded as an object of curiosity rather than of imitation. The gloominess and solemnity of the Gothic buildings are highly characteristical of northern superstition, and in them we trace the progress of a people gradually advancing from rough and uncultivated manners, to ideas of beauty and grace. Many of them are executed with a great degree of lightness and ease, and charged with the richest profusion of ornaments. But true taste is offended at the misapplied exertions of genius, and recurs with eagerness to the chaste and elegant designs, which were produced under the influence of the milder climates of Greece and Italy.

Nor have the labours of the moderns been more successful in the sister arts of sculpture and painting. The many celebrated statues preserved amidst the general ruin, exist as lasting monuments of that unrivalled excellence, which the invention and skill of the Grecian artists enabled them to attain^h. Michael Angelo himself, the greatest of modern sculptors, has not scrupled to acknowledgeⁱ how unequal he found himself to the attempt of producing anything comparable to these finished specimens of art.

^g Observations on Spenser, vol. ii. p. 185, et seq.

^h Abbé du Bos, *Reflexions sur la Poesie et Peint.* vol. i. p. 385.

ⁱ Turnbull's *Ancient Paintings*, p. 156.

Unfortunately for the lovers of antiquity, no remains of Grecian paintings, and probably none of the best among the Romans, have been transmitted to posterity^k. But the universal admiration bestowed upon them by their contemporaries, and the testimony of poets and orators, who in their descriptions of sculpture and painting have usually delivered themselves in the same terms, may safely be relied on as guides to our judgment. In arts so nearly related the transition is easy and decisive. A taste for delicacy of proportion, beauty of design, and sublime expression, could not but be exquisite in a people accustomed to the contemplation of all these excellences in the works of a Lysippus, a Praxiteles, and a Phidias^l.

But although the ancients, by uniting in their productions everything beautiful and majestic, have precluded all attempts to surpass them in the arts of design; yet the industry and experience of the moderns have struck out many discoveries, which have tended to assist and relieve the artist in the practice of his favourite employment.

This remark is applicable, though in a more enlarged sense, to the music of modern ages. So little can be ascertained concerning the state

^k Abbé du Bos, vol. i. p. 371.

^l Idem, vol. i. p. 392. Webb on Painting, p. 159.

of this art among the ancients^m, that its comparative merit will remain undecided. We must rest contented with the names alone of those persons who, in the prosperous days of Greece, presided with unlimited sway over the minds of their audienceⁿ, and roused or composed their passions by the alternate influence of the Phrygian and Lydian modes. The songs of Tyrtæus, which re-animated the drooping spirits of the Spartans, and recalled them to victory and triumph, might perhaps derive their effect from the poetry which accompanied them. But whatever power we attribute to the ancient melodies, it is probable that the discovery of counterpoint, which forms the leading feature in the music of the present times, has greatly enriched the principles of the art^o; as the various instruments of late invention have in an equal degree facilitated and improved its practice. Modern Italy, the reviver and nurse of all the arts of elegance, has given birth to those excellences in music, which were so happily combined by the genius of Handel^p. In the sacred oratorios of this master, while every individual is transported with the enchanting melody of his songs, the lover of art enjoys a more refined

^m Burney's History of Music, vol. i. p. 3.

ⁿ Idem, vol. i. p. 179.

^o Idem, vol. i. p. 151, and vol. ii. p. 70. Hawkins's History of Music, vol. v. p. 426.

^p Burney, vol. ii. p. 470.

pleasure in contemplating the wonderful powers of harmony displayed in the composition of his sublime choruses.

It is not, however, on these grounds that the advocate for modern times will seek to establish his claim of superiority. He will be content to resign to antiquity that share of praise which it so justly merits from a successful cultivation of the imitative arts; fully satisfied with the great advantages he enjoys in every other respect; since it is to the moderns that we are indebted for the many sublime theories, many useful inventions, and interesting discoveries in science, which have exalted human knowledge to a state of eminence unknown in any former period of history.

Among the several acquisitions, which age and experience have procured to mankind, the perfection of the arts of reasoning may rank as the first. Philosophy, which for near two thousand years had paid implicit obedience to the dictates of Aristotle, was emancipated at a late era by the discoveries of Bacon^q. This great man, while he entertained the highest respect for the abilities of the illustrious Grecian, was no less acute in noting his deficiencies^r. He readily saw that his inquiries into the human mind were imperfect

^q Bruckeri *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*, vol. v. p. 95. 586.

^r *Idem*, vol. v. p. 92.

and often erroneous; that many of his definitions were obscure^s and inadequate: and that his method of argument was calculated rather to promote the subtleties of dispute^t, than the establishment of sound conclusions. Dating, therefore, from this period the introduction of a more genuine philosophy, we may next remark its improvement by the writings of Des Cartes. False as the systems of the latter have appeared, and dangerous perhaps to the cause of truth, he must yet be allowed to have contributed^u much to the advancement of the arts of reasoning; since from him the philosopher was instructed to analyze his thoughts with exactness, and to argue with a clearness and precision, which he had not before acquired. But the event most worthy of our attention is the light that was thrown on the human mind by the celebrated treatise of Locke. From this time a new field of investigation has been opened; by which man is enabled to look into his understanding, to examine the nature and extent of his ideas, to pursue them through their several connections and dependencies, and to develop the most secret springs of his words and actions.

The abstracted nature of metaphysics has but

^s Bruckeri *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*, vol. i. p. 801.

^t Bayle's *Dictionary*, article Bacon, edit. London, 1735.

^u Brucker, vol. v. p. 248.

too often proved a source of wild speculation, in which every capricious inquirer has laboured to support some favourite but absurd theory^x, and contributed to mislead the judgment of mankind. Happily for true knowledge, these errors have seldom been permitted to remain long without detection. The visionary systems of Des Cartes and Mallebranche have been sufficiently exposed, notwithstanding the great reputation of their authors. There are many, nevertheless, who have been actuated in this pursuit with a serious love of truth, and have preserved a due caution and restraint in metaphysical research; by whose labours this abstruse science has been cleared of so much of its obscurity, and applied to the solid purposes of information and improvement.

But no part of learning has perhaps been cultivated with greater success by the moderns than the study of moral philosophy. The examples of Aristotle and Plato, of Tully and Seneca^y, have been followed on the liberal and extensive plan of supplying from experience whatever was deficient in their knowledge. Combining with the lessons of these masters their own observations on every succeeding form of government, Grotius and Puffendorf^z gave the first

^x Brucker, vol. v. p. 155. 163. 251. 597.

^y Idem, vol. v. p. 722. 777.

^z Idem, vol. v. p. 730. 736. 756.

establishment to moral philosophy in two illustrious treatises, which are eminently distinguished among the literary productions of the seventeenth century. Since that time the inquiry has been prosecuted with all the earnestness which it so well deserves. Our grateful acknowledgments are due to the friends of science in a sister country, for their exertions on this subject^a. These writers, with a diligence and attention equal to their judgment, have not only examined morality in its relation to individuals, but have traced it through its widest effects and its most extensive influences; by investigating the general rights of nations; the nature of their internal polity; the several causes of their wealth and power, together with the particular duties of man in society, which constitute the first principles of civil jurisprudence. From this cultivation of moral science a greater advantage has resulted to learning than its warmest advocates probably foresaw. By thus minutely studying the temper of mankind, and by perfecting its acquaintance with law and politics, history has acquired that spirit of just remark, and philosophical turn of character, which we so much admire in the writings of Robertson and Hume.

Continuing our pursuit from these subjects of

^a See Ferguson's *History of Civil Society*. Steuart's *Political Economy*. Smith's *Origin and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.

speculative reasoning to those of a more demonstrative nature, it is obvious to direct our view to the advances of the moderns in the study of mathematics. The works of Euclid, of Apollonius, and Archimedes, contain a valuable treasure of the mathematical knowledge of antiquity. The last of these might well excite the concern of a Marcellus^b amidst the heat of conquest, and kindle a generous enthusiasm in the breast of a Cicero^c, when he contemplated the tomb of this illustrious philosopher. But living in an early age of science, when the advantages from preceding observations were comparatively small, they could only lay the foundations of that excellence, to which posterity has since arrived. That this is the case will appear evident to all who remark the progress of mathematical learning since the beginning of the last century. They will find many new and unknown properties of figures explained, and their dimensions more exactly defined: they will observe, with singular satisfaction, the extensive and efficacious improvements in the science of numbers, by the discoveries of Napier, of Wallis, and Newton.

But the superiority of modern mathematics will appear most conspicuous, when we consider them in their application to the other branches of

^b Cicero, Act. 2. in Verr. lib. iv. 58.

^c Idem, Tusc. Disp. lib. v. 23.

science: when we view them assisting the philosopher in the study of nature, and enabling him to conduct his inquiries with that nice accuracy so necessary to the truth of philosophical research. Furnished with these helps, he is never at a loss to demonstrate the certainty of his observations; and while he is continually proceeding towards new discoveries, he has the opportunity of submitting them to the clearest and most satisfactory evidence.

For this powerful alliance with geometry and arithmetic, natural philosophy is indebted to the instructions of Bacon^d; as well as for the more remarkable aid which she has obtained by the means of experiment. It was this, indeed, which alone could supply the true method of information, and give to this important science that stability and dignity of character which it now possesses. A mere external observation of the phenomena of nature was not sufficient for the purposes of real knowledge. It was necessary to examine her through the medium of art; and by a careful separation of her principles in some respects, or a combination of them in others, to consider her in every possible point of view: to mark her various powers and operations: and to trace the whole series of natural effects to their secret and most remote causes.

^d Brucker, vol. v. p. 99. 613.

The readiness with which this mode of investigation was adopted by the professors of science, and the ardour with which it was prosecuted, have been attended with all the success which the most sanguine expectation could have formed to itself. The several qualities of bodies; their mechanical forces, and the laws of their motion; the nature and properties of air and water, of heat and cold, of light and colours; have each in their turn been scrutinized by the sure test of experiment, and received from it the most ample illustration. A variety of instruments have been employed in the course of this undertaking; not merely to amuse and gratify curiosity by the wonderful appearances which they exhibit, but with the solid aim of facilitating the progress of inquiry, and the establishment of a true and sound philosophy. The airpump, the thermometer, and the Torricellian experiment, while they reflect the highest credit on the genius of their inventors, have produced the most beneficial consequences to science, from the valuable information they open to us in that province to which they belong.

So striking, indeed, is the difference between the ancients and the moderns in this respect, that every experiment made use of, and every instrument invented by the latter, may be considered as a decisive testimony of their superiority. It was a kind of appeal to which the ancients seldom had recourse in the midst of their doubts and

perplexities: the character of the moderns, therefore, must consequently rise in the same proportion, as the uncertain conclusions of opinion and conjecture are exceeded by the infallible evidence of facts.

It would be an injustice to the cause of modern learning, to pass over in silence those societies^e which the liberality of princes, and other great men, has established for the promotion of science in their respective countries. The experiments performed by the academies of Paris, Bologna, Florence, Petersburg, and Berlin, will be ever remembered with honour by the candid and unprejudiced of every nation. Among these useful institutions, our own may claim distinguished eminence. The names of a Boyle and a Newton, of a Barrow and a Wren, are such arguments in its favour as no malice of its adversaries can pretend to invalidate. That great architect is not more justly celebrated for the classical^f simplicity and grandeur of his buildings, than for the many noble^g discoveries with which he has enriched mathematics and philosophy.

To this enlarged purpose of illustrating by experiment the principles of general science, the most fertile resources have been derived from the

^e Brucker, vol. v. p. 661.

^f Wren's Parentalia, p. 289. 308. 343.

^g Idem, p. 182. 185. 198. 207. 239, etc.

successful labours of the chemist. The study of chemistry, little understood by the early ages, and chiefly confined to the knowledge of metals^h, has since been directed to the most extensive objects; comprehending in the sphere of its intelligence every part of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. As there is no branch of science, perhaps, which exhibits such a variety of wonderful and interesting particulars, so there is none which more immediately owes its advancement to the discoveries of the moderns. It is, indeed, one of those instances in which the present age has manifested its superiority over every preceding period. The greatest and the wisest men do not scruple to devote much of their time, of their fortunes, and of their easeⁱ, to the practice of chemical experiments; and no process is thought too tedious or difficult, if it can afford the slightest opportunity of investigating some unknown principle of nature, or of confirming by additional testimony the truth of what had been before observed.

The history of electricity meanwhile presents to our view a series of wonderful events since the commencement of the present century, when it first began to be cultivated with any degree of attention^k. It is curious to remark the circum-

^h Watson's Chemical Essays, vol. i. p. 15. 18. 30. 38. 42.

ⁱ Idem, p. 40.

^k Priestly's History of Electricity, p. 15.

stances of its progress: how near some have approached^l to truths which were afterwards discovered; in how many respects accident^m, and in others well-conducted inquiryⁿ, have gradually opened the way to the most interesting observations on the properties of this subtile and penetrating fluid. While its effects were regarded by many with terror and astonishment^o, in others they served only to inspire new curiosity, and to encourage them to greater attempts. The bold experiments of Franklin^p have brought to light some of the sublimest secrets of nature, and established the science on the basis of a regular system. Similar experiments and reasonings have been employed by others, with every appearance of success, in explaining the causes^q of meteors, waterspouts, hurricanes, and earthquakes. The ardour and resolution which philosophers have demonstrated on these occasions, and the liberal spirit of communication which they have indulged, give us reason to hope that their subsequent improvements will be proportionably great, and that the time is arriving, when this study will be enriched with discoveries still more important and astonishing.

^l Priestly's History of Electricity, p. 95. 98. 120. 171.

^m Idem, p. 29. 49. 82. 96. 295. 586. 591.

ⁿ Idem, p. 19. 31. 102. 105. 108. 298. 303. 321. 353. 369.

^o Idem, p. 83.

^p Idem, p. 158. 162, etc.

^q Idem, p. 373, et seq.

If from these researches in philosophy we turn our attention to the general history of nature, we shall find the same eminent superiority in the knowledge and experience of the moderns. To elucidate the science of this globe, which forms the first branch of natural history, every expedient has been used that the sagacity of the learned could suggest. Minerals, fossils, shells^r; every remarkable production^s of land or sea; even the most prodigious works of nature^t, tides, storms, earthquakes, and volcanos, have been diligently scrutinized, with a view to discover, if possible, their origin and effects. Natural philosophy and chemistry^u have lent their aid: the most accurate inquiries and observations have been instituted in every part of the world; the accounts of navigators have been collected and compared; and they have all tended to the promotion of one great end—a juster and more perfect theory of the earth.

Those appearances, therefore, which astonished the understanding and baffled the ingenuity of Pliny, and one of which, by too near an inspection, proved so fatal to that bold and enterprising philosopher, form at length a subject of secure and fruitful speculation, and assume the foremost

^r Buffon's Nat. Hist. vol. i. p. 157, et seq. octavo edit. London, 1785; vol. vii. p. 98, etc.

^s Idem, vol. i. p. 229, et seq.

^t Idem, *ibid.* p. 339, et seq.

^u Watson, vol. i. p. 181; vol. ii. p. 93; vol. iii. p. 51.

place in the disquisitions of the naturalist. And these sublime theories, while they exalt the character of natural history, by exhibiting the magnitude of its objects, compose a no less flattering panegyric of that age and of those persons by whose labours they have been so successfully illustrated and explained.

The improvements in the history of animated nature, and in the extensive study of botany, afford us an equal degree of satisfaction. Ever since the age of Gesner these sciences have been gradually advancing to that rank and estimation in the world, which they now hold by the great exertions of Linnæus. We have not only to congratulate ourselves on the stores of knowledge which have been supplied by the discovery of foreign countries, but we have likewise the pleasure to observe, that a more intimate acquaintance has been cultivated with those which before existed. A philosophic spirit of inquiry^{*} is adopted, which, not content with the superficial characteristics of name and figure, is employed in examining the internal properties, and in tracing the various relations and distinctions of every individual production of nature.

The anatomy of plants and animals furnishes ample assistance to this undertaking; and by the successful application of microscopes, that mode

^{*} Preface to Buffon, p. 15.

of experiment seems now to have attained a very high degree of excellence. These instruments not only display to us numberless orders of beings before unknown, but enable us to discern with exactness the most diminutive parts in the constitution of larger bodies. Nor ought we to object to the minuteness of these researches. By a nice examination of the internal parts of vegetables we discover the wonderful analogy^y which they bear to the structure of the animal system: and any investigation of this kind is eminently useful for the light which it affords by comparison to the study of the human frame.

It is our duty, nevertheless, to pay every acknowledgment to those persons who, by the invention of systematical arrangements, have contributed to facilitate the science of natural history, and to clear it of the many encumbrances which necessarily arise from the extensiveness of the subject. These employments, when confined within proper bounds, are productive of much utility; and are then only to be regarded as faulty, when they appear to engage too large a share of our attention, and to withdraw our minds from the consideration of more elevated objects.

The mutual relation that subsists between the arts has been a subject of frequent remark. So

^y Buffon, vol. ii. chap. i.

intimate is this connection, that any improvement in a particular art extends its influence to others, and is perceptible through every corresponding part of study. Medicine may be considered as partaking of these improvements in natural history, of which it forms indeed no insignificant branch. But independent of its general alliance with physiology, it has derived many advantages peculiar to itself from the skilful exercise of chemistry^z and anatomy in modern ages. One great instance of the perfection of the latter is the celebrated discovery of Harvey, which has given a new direction to the inquiries of physicians, and materially enlarged their knowledge of the animal economy of man. This advancement in the science of medicine can never be too much insisted upon: especially when we reflect that in a study of this nature even the minutest discovery is of the utmost importance, and nearly concerns every individual. We cannot but feel a sensible pleasure in the success of any attempt to soften the rigorous effects of pain and sickness, and to prolong but for a little space the frail and perishable tenure of human life.

But the history of astronomy furnishes the most decisive evidence in favour of the moderns, and completes perhaps their triumph in the provinces of science. The mist of ignorance and

^z Watson, vol. i. p. 25. 39.

error that had so long enveloped this great study, was first dissipated by the sagacity of Copernicus^a: who discerning the false and absurd conclusions of the ancients, restored at length the genuine theory of Pythagoras, which they had vainly rejected as groundless and imaginary. This fortunate revolution was attended with a series of the noblest discoveries by the successive endeavours of Tycho Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo. It was here that the mighty genius of Newton displayed itself in its brightest lustre. With a vastness of thought, and a depth of penetration peculiar to himself, he unfolded the invisible laws which govern the celestial bodies, and established beyond the reach of controversy that simple but sublime system on which the modern astronomer founds all his inquiries. It were needless to enumerate the many and great improvements which have been accomplished by the discovery and perfection of telescopes, and by the voyages of observation undertaken for this purpose. In all these instances the advantage has not been confined to one object. If astronomy on its own part has received material assistance, it has amply repaid the obligation, by the influence it has produced on other branches of science: by its efficacy in correcting the errors of chronology^b, and

^a Costard's Hist. of Astronomy, p. 163. Brucker, vol. v. p. 627. et seq.

^b Costard, p. 235.

in leading us to a more extensive acquaintance with the habitable globe.

A study so pleasing to the natural curiosity of man, and so productive of general utility as that of geography, cannot fail to interest us in the warmest manner for its success. It is with great satisfaction, therefore, that we behold this science carried to the utmost perfection by the progress of navigation among the moderns. The invention of the compass^c in the fourteenth century excited an unusual ardour in the minds of men: they were no longer terrified with the fabulous descriptions of the torrid zone: and, disdaining the limits prescribed them by antiquity, they ventured to attempt unknown seas in search of another hemisphere. By the efforts of Portugal^d a free communication was opened with the eastern world: and Spain, led by the daring spirit of Columbus, commenced a scene of enterprise, which has terminated in the discovery of a new continent, abounding in the richest productions of nature. Britain has not been wanting to the encouragement of these undertakings. In the number of her navigators she boasts a Byron and a Cook: by whose well-directed labours^e she

^c Robertson's History of America, vol. i. p. 44. 8vo. edition, London, 1783.

^d Robertson, book i. and ii.

Introduction to Cook's last Voyage, 4to. London, 1784.

has been enabled to ascertain with exactness the geography of the southern ocean, and extended her inquiries to many of the unexplored regions of the north.

Among the greatest events which distinguish the annals of nations, some circumstances ever occur to humble us by the mortifying acknowledgment of human weakness and imperfection. The cruelties^f exercised on the inhabitants of the new world, and the fate of the authors of these discoveries, from the ungrateful returns^g of their country, or from inevitable misfortunes, inspire us with sensations painful to humanity. The utility, however, derived from their labours still continues the same: and it is impossible to contemplate mankind thus bursting from a long confinement, penetrating to the most distant parts of the earth, and extending the influence of arts, laws, manners, and religion, to these remote countries, without finding our ideas and affections sensibly enlarged. These exploits of modern ages may justly be considered as objects of the first consequence: not only as they have supplied inexhaustible sources of national wealth and greatness, or afforded such material assistance to arts and sciences in general; but as they have opened the way to farther improve-

^f Robertson, vol. i. p. 160. 198. 220. 228. 240. 263, etc.

^g Idem, p. 192. 216. 260, etc.

ments^b in that most interesting of all studies—the philosophical history of man.

In examining the several arguments of modern excellence, it seems necessary likewise to remark the change which has taken place in the military art, by the introduction of artillery. Considered indeed as a more successful means of destroying the human race, this invention would have little claim to our praise: but a more impartial investigation of the subject will lead us to attribute it to this cause, no less than to the happy refinement of modern manners, that the business of war is now conducted with less cruelty, and its operations rendered more effective and expeditious. But its utility has been best experienced in the progress of navigation, and the settlement of colonies, since it afforded to the nations of Europe a powerful and often harmless instrument of victoryⁱ, and greatly facilitated their establishment in the uncivilized countries which they discovered.

Nor will it be doubted, after the preceding view, that the same active spirit of improvement has communicated itself to every other art of public concern, on which the wealth and prosperity of nations more immediately depend. Agri-

^b Introduction to Cook's last Voyage. Foster's Observations, etc. chap. vi. Robertson, book iv.

ⁱ Robertson, vol. i. p. 114, 127. 157, etc.

culture is successfully employed in surmounting the natural disadvantages of climate, and imparting fertility to northern regions: by the great excellence of mechanics, manufactures of every kind flourish in their fullest extent: and commerce is advanced to the highest state of perfection, uniting in the bonds of social intercourse the most distant nations of the world, and administering to every country a liberal supply of its wants and luxuries from the superfluous productions of others.

Such is the prospect which presents itself of the improvements and discoveries of the moderns, in the several branches of sciences, and in the practical arts of life. The last particular which remains, and which indeed forms the principal distinction between ancient and modern learning, is the invention of printing. It is true the want of this art among the ancients, furnishes us with a subject of regret rather than triumph, since it probably repressed the efforts of many an elegant and cultivated mind, and deprived us of a number of valuable productions, which might otherwise have descended to posterity. The loss they sustained in this respect we may very well estimate by the advantages which it is the more fortunate lot of the moderns to enjoy. While the treasures of learning are daily multiplied by the means of printing, and are everywhere extensively circulated, our minds are at the same

time effectually relieved from any apprehension of its future ruin by the fury of uncivilized conquerors, or the more silent ravages of time.

The modern art of engraving may rank under this head, and considered in their application to every part of science, the utility derived from prints has been little inferior to that of types¹. By bringing every object of study before our eyes^y in its proper form and situation, they greatly accelerate our progress, and afford us that intelligence at one view, which a multiplicity of words would tediously, and at best but imperfectly, convey. Their use is peculiarly felt by the historian and the biographer¹: whom they constantly and uniformly assist, and supply with the most striking resemblances of those persons, whose character, manners, and actions, it is his office to delineate.

With the arts they have ever maintained a friendly intercourse, and signalized themselves as useful allies^m. The works of the architect, the statuary, and the painter, are thus transmitted to a multitude of copies, in their original form of beauty, and their nicest and most exact proportions. Every admirer of ancient art will readily acknowledge the obligation he has to prints for

¹ De Piles, *Lives of Painters*, p. 51.

^k Abbé du Bos, vol. i. p. 420.

^l Preface to Granger's *Biographical History*.

^m Strutt's *Essay on Engraving*, chap. i.

affording him an easy opportunity of conversing with the artists of antiquity, and examining the specimens of their buildings, statues, bas-reliefs, paintings, and medals. In some respects their utility is particular and appropriate. Many ancient *Frescos*ⁿ, whose colours and materials were of too fading a nature to survive long after their discovery, exist only in the copies of the engraver: and thus these faithful representatives preserve to us every leading feature, and every higher excellence of expression and design, when the originals are now no more. We owe to the same cause our acquaintance with some of the finest productions of modern artists^o. By the assistance of a Mark Antonio^p and a Strange, we are enabled, when denied the sight of their paintings, to contemplate the noble simplicity and exquisite grace of a Raphael and a Correggio.

But exclusive of their relative merit, printing and engraving may of themselves claim no inconsiderable rank in the number of the fine arts. Books now excite our attention, not only by their intrinsic uses, but by the external beauty of their characters: and prints have assumed such perfection under the hands of several painters^q and engravers, as nearly to rival the productions of the pencil. Indeed their title will be no longer dis-

ⁿ Abbé du Bos, vol. i. p. 377, 380.

^o Idem, p. 508.

^p Strutt's Engravers, vol. ii. p. 255.

^q Strutt's Essay on Engraving.

puted, should the friends of elegance complete the plan they have lately undertaken of illustrating the works of our greatest poet by the aid of his kindred artists.

From the whole of this view, therefore, it will appear, that the moderns, though unequal to the ancients in poetry, architecture, sculpture, and painting, have greatly excelled them in every part of philosophy and science, and in those arts which contribute to the support of civil life. If they cannot claim a superiority in the former instances, it is not so much that their abilities were inferior to those of their great predecessors, as that these arts have certain boundaries, which human nature does not suffer us to pass. Wherever a possibility of improvement remained, from the patient operations of industry, or the efforts of vigorous and profound thinking, their endeavours have been everywhere successful: whilst their inventive faculties have been sufficiently distinguished by the aids they have introduced in the practice of their several studies, and by the discovery of arts before unknown. This result of the inquiry will afford a grateful reflection to every benevolent mind, as it effectually refutes the gloomy opinions, which some have maintained, of the gradual degeneracy of the human race. We shall be convinced that the powers of genius and intellect still exist in their original and native energy: that arts and sciences, however easily

and skilfully managed by the ancients, were not, like the spear of their Achilles, too mighty to be handled by posterity; and that a mental superiority is no more to be attributed to the early ages of mankind, than the fabulous pretences of gigantic stature.

No confidence, however, in our own attainments, will justify us in withdrawing our admiration from the venerable characters of Greece and Rome, who have initiated us in the first principles of science, and prepared our minds for the relish of everything sublime and beautiful in the arts. To the productions which these elegant people have left us, we owe not only the superiority, but even the existence of modern learning: and we may safely pronounce, that in proportion as we cease to have recourse to those perfect models of excellence, true taste, and the cultivation of genuine science, will invariably decline.

We shall remember, likewise, that there are many parts of science which are yet comparatively in their infancy, and in which the experience of these times will perhaps be considered by posterity as very confined. We may, it is true, fairly indulge the hope that the most adequate improvements will be accomplished by the present age. The causes which an eminent author^r has

^r Sir W. Temple, *Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning*.

remarked as obstructing the progress of modern literature, have long ceased to operate. Theological controversy, once agitated with so general and undiscerning a rage, is now conducted with calmness, and confined to a few individuals: the tumults of war prevail but seldom, and are heard only at a distance: arts and sciences are liberally patronised by the opulent and powerful, and by the favour of royal munificence: and the professors of learning are themselves distinguished by an equally disinterested and unostentatious love of knowledge.

While we are, therefore, far from arrogantly assuming to ourselves an immoderate share of commendation, we shall look, however, with a becoming satisfaction on the age in which it is our happiness to live; and we shall be studious to approve ourselves worthy of this privilege, by a constant endeavour to promote the interests of learning, and the general advantages of mankind.

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1787.

ON THE
CHARACTERISTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
ANCIENT AND MODERN POETRY, AND
THE SEVERAL CAUSES FROM
WHICH THEY RESULT.

GENIUS is the growth of all ages and all countries. But the exertions and the applications of it are influenced by external occurrences, and depend upon the circumstances of time and place. In the frozen regions of the north, the powers of the mind have been found to lie torpid and contracted; in climates placed under the immediate influence of the sun they have become languid and debilitated; but under a mild and temperate sky they have displayed themselves with undiminished energy, and contributed to the utility or ornament of human nature. Yet even amid these countries, in different places at the same time, or among the same people at different periods, the operations of kindred genius have varied with the changes of national character. In poetic composition in particular, productions of the same species have been marked at distinct eras, by

separate and even opposite characteristics. Thus the mental endowments of Homer and Ariosto, or of Sophocles and Shakspeare, were similar in their essence, and only diversified in their culture and direction.

The history of mankind has been divided into two comprehensive periods, the ancient and the modern world. The former, originating in a state of simple nature, advanced through the regular stages of society to a very high degree of civilization: the latter, commenced in the mixture of savage ignorance and degenerated learning, has proceeded through a variety of uncommon changes and dissimilar situations, and is at length arrived at the most elevated point of human refinement. From the diversity of circumstances, which attended the origin, the progress, and the perfection of these two grand eras, many eminent distinctions have taken place in their languages, their national character, and their mythology. A full examination of these distinctions, in their particular relation to poetry, will bring before us, into one comprehensive view, the characteristic differences between the ancient and the modern world in this branch of composition. Investigations of this nature are eminently beneficial to man: they remove from him the ungenerous prejudices of local and personal attachments, and open his conceptions to the merits of foreign nations and past ages: they teach him to sup-

press the praises of blind admiration, and the animadversions of indiscriminating censure: they accustom him to select, to compare, and to prefer: and thus tend in their general effects to enlarge the imagination, to strengthen the judgment, and to correct the taste.

A variety of dialects, a sweetness and sublimity of sounds, and a grandeur of compound epithets, have imparted to Grecian poetry that elevation and melody of style, which can never be attained by the cultivators of the rough and disjointed languages of modern nations. From the perpetual recurrence of military services among the Romans^a, the terms of the camp and the ideas of conquest imperceptibly mixed themselves with the language of that people, and gave to the productions of the poet that dignity of expression and majesty of style, which distinguish the works of the Augustan era. In addition to these characteristics of the Greek and Roman languages taken separately, they were both equally possessed of an uncommon sweetness and variety of phraseology, which was derived from a diversity in the termination of inflections, and from a boundless liberty of inversion in the arrangement of words. These advantages were assisted and heightened by the use of accentual syllables, and a singular propriety of poetical measures. The

^a Harris's *Hermes*, chap. v. p. 411.

grandeur of heroics, the variety and animation of lyrics, the plaintive flow of elegiacs, and the natural plainness of iambics, all so happily correspond with the several departments of poetry, to which they are applied, that while the judgment is improved by the sentiment, the ear is delighted with the sound; and we feel ourselves at one time exalted to sublimity by the majestic numbers of Homer and Virgil, at another depressed into compassion by the slow and melancholy cadences of Bion and Tibullus.

From a prospect so favourable to the genius of poetry, we turn with regret to the languages of modern nations. The conquerors of Rome, importing a dialect as rugged and wild as their native mountains and deserts, gradually incorporated their own barbarous tongue into the polished phraseology of antiquity; and, varying this combination according to the distance of their settlements from the capitol, produced a dissonance of syllables, an unnatural intermixture of words, and a general diversity of national languages: while the perpetual recurrence of monosyllables lowered the dignity of their diction, and sunk it into meanness and imbecility. Modern nations have endeavoured to obviate in some measure the influence of these defects, by the use of rhyme. But what they have added to the melody, they have taken from the sense: and for a vitious consonance of tones, and a satiating similarity of

sounds, have given up those glowing and animated expressions, which form such full and majestic closes to the descriptions of Homer and Virgil. Unhappily this tasteless invention of the monks has been adopted by the majority of our poets; and has been introduced not only into elegy and pastoral, but into lyric and heroic composition; and in neighbouring kingdoms has even been permitted to debilitate the effect, and weaken the probability, of dramatic representations.

But there are few human institutions, which, however injurious in their general effect, are not eminently beneficial in some peculiar part. The same languages, which restrain and weaken genius in the higher departments of poetry, are particularly adapted to productions of the humbler muse. That ease and liveliness of dialogue, which modern refinement has introduced into common conversation, and which has rendered the manners of France the object of imitation to the several states of Europe, has been adopted with peculiar felicity by the satirist and comic poet; and has imparted to their productions^b a gaiety of style and brilliancy of expression to which the majestic languages of Greece and Rome could never be brought to descend. The sentence

^b Monboddo on the Origin and Progress of Language, part ii. book iv. vol. iii. p. 397.

which condemns the use of rhyme in serious poetry, is just and decisive: but were we to censure the introduction of it into the lighter pieces of wit and humour, we should deprive the cultivators of this species of composition of an eminent advantage, which distinguishes them from the writers of antiquity. To point the witty, to heighten the ludicrous, and to enliven the gay, are the striking characteristics of this art: our mirth is as readily provoked by the quaint and double rhymes in *Hudibras*^c, as by the inimitable humour of its author. While Pope, in the *Rape of the Lock*, by a most judicious exercise of rhyme, has diffused over his composition a general air of gaiety, and directed the shafts of ridicule with spirit and vivacity.

From considering the differences which have resulted to ancient and modern poetry from the variation of languages, we proceed to an examination of the distinctions which have arisen from the changes of national character. Its effects will be considered in their relation first to the several species, and then to the general body of poetry.

The delicacy of taste, and the artless elegance of manners, which prevailed in the flourishing ages of Athenian literature, produced that simplicity of thought and accurate delineation of na-

^c Home's *Elements of Criticism*, vol. ii. chap. xviii. sect. 4.

ture, which mark the smaller productions of the Grecian muse. The chaste and simple character of the Greek epigram would be dishonoured by a comparison with the unnatural wit and indecent sentiment with which, in imitation of the vitiated taste of Martial, modern poets have degraded and vilified this species of composition. This defect has, however, been amply compensated to the moderns by the invention of the sonnet; a mode of composition chaste and simple in its design, and somewhat similar to the original epigram of Greece.

Airiness and vivacity of style and thought, propriety and justness of sentiment and description, and truth and spirit in delineating the feelings of the heart, have recommended the writings of Anacreon and Sappho to the notice and admiration of all succeeding ages. These interesting qualifications were superseded, in the similar productions of the last century, by affectation, pedantry, and conceit.

Didactic poetry requires for its perfection the combined efforts of genius and art. It was in the refined period of Roman literature that the *Georgics* of Virgil exhibited a matchless pattern of artfulness and grace of precept, of beauty and variety of digression, and of pomp and splendour of diction and imagery. Modern poets, unable to confer additional elegance on this species of composition, have almost invariably adopted the

method established by Virgil, and have consequently weakened their writings by all the coldness and languor, which are necessarily inseparable from imitation.

The origin of tales and romances may be developed in the annals of Italian literature. The same extravagance of Platonic affection which gave rise to the *Decameron* of Boccace, forms also the subject of those beautiful compositions which were written with such spirit and originality by the elder modern bards. That faithful delineation of early national manners, which is equally the characteristic of Homer and of the writers of romance, is interspersed and enlivened in the latter by the humorous and the wonderful. It is by these powerful attractions that the genius of Chaucer still fixes the attention of his reader notwithstanding the ruggedness and obscurity of an unpolished and antiquated diction.

Elegiac poetry may be expected to have been carried to its highest perfection by those nations of antiquity in which a correctness of taste, a representation of undisguised natural feelings, and a relish for the unadorned beauties of nature, were considered as the fundamental and absolute requisites of literary perfection. The elegies of Bion and Tibullus are indeed marked by a peculiar happiness of expressing with tenderness and simplicity the feelings of an ingenuous mind when depressed by misfortunes, or perplexed by the

softer passions. Modern poets, from the more philosophical character of later ages, have differed from the writers of antiquity by interspersing their descriptions with those beautiful moral reflections, which in the compositions of Gray so powerfully engage our attention and awaken our sensibility. While Pope, by the help of a religion peculiarly calculated to affect the imagination, has exhibited, in his epistle of Eloisa, that pomp and splendour of imagery, that glowing ardour of composition, and that alternate ascendancy of predominating passions, which are vainly expected in the frigid and puerile complaints of the heroes and heroines of Ovid.

Pastoral poetry is more immediately influenced by the state of society. A genuine taste in Greece for the simple beauties of nature, a respectability and dignity annexed to the rural character, a near alliance with the ages of primeval simplicity, a refinement of sentiment unaccompanied with artificial manners, a peculiar deliciousness of soil and climate, and a melody, variety, and elegant rusticity of dialect, all formed for Theocritus an unexampled assemblage of external advantages. Hence it was, that he was enabled to exhibit an uncommon nicety of discrimination between the several ranks of goatherds^d, shepherds, and herdsmen; and to copy from real life a dig-

^d Warton's Theocritus, *Dissertatio de Bucolicis Græcorum*.

nified simplicity of rural characters and manners; and to delineate those natural and picturesque landscapes, which were daily presented to his view amid the romantic scenery of Sicily.

Pastoral poetry in Rome was cultivated at a period when many of the causes, which contributed to the excellence of Theocritus, had ceased to operate; yet Virgil, though exhibiting a style and a cast of thought rather too refined for this species of composition, is distinguished from all succeeding writers by an elegance and propriety of description, and a most exquisite tenderness of sentiment.

Totally destitute of the advantages which Greece enjoyed, modern pastoral poets have had recourse to foreign and extrinsic aids; and the consequent absurdities of their productions need only be enumerated in order to be condemned. Sannazarius, by a bold but unfortunate attempt, has exhibited a striking proof of the uniformity and coldness of description, of the unimportance and sameness of character, and of the wearisome barrenness of incident, which constitute the necessary characteristics of piscatory eclogues. In our own country rusticity of style and coarseness of sentiment has been mistaken, by Spenser and Phillips, for simplicity and nature. While a mechanical adaptation of incident and imagery to times and seasons, and an injudicious intermixture of foreign and native scenery, and ancient

and modern mythology, have rendered the pastorals of Pope a melancholy instance of the inability of human genius to attain universal perfection. The refined gallantries of courts become disgusting when transferred by the French and Italian authors to the inhabitants of fields and meadows. But when political questions and theological controversies are agitated through the medium of illiterate countrymen, our judgment smiles at the weakness of the deception, and censure is suspended by contempt.

The genius of satire is so immediately derived from the manners of mankind, that its performances are justly held up as the mirror of the times in which they were composed. It is from some striking variation in the government or customs of countries, that the several distinctions have arisen, which subsist between the satirical productions of ancient and modern nations. The rough and martial character of the elder Roman, who revered virtue and valour alone, and who listened with eagerness to the public animadversions of a slave upon the vices and immoralities of his lord, may be plainly discovered in the spirited and personal attacks of Lucilius. Amid modern refinement this manly species of invective has been almost universally suppressed: and whenever private resentment, or scurrilous malignity, have endeavoured to revive the authority of personal satire, the opinions of the public may be fairly

collected from the contempt and disgust which has been uniformly levelled against the author of the *Dunciad*, and against the late indecent and unjustifiable attacks upon the most exalted character of this country.

There may, however, be periods in the annals of the world, in which the satirist cannot behold the general depravity without cherishing a generous and manly indignation. The enormous vices of a corrupted court, and the base effeminacy of degenerate conquerors, could only be exposed by the severe invective of a Juvenal. We are proud to avow, that modern times have never been presented with an opportunity of equalling the works of the indignant Roman. And we leave him with pleasure in the unenvied possession of a superiority, which can only be disputed amidst a general extinction of the first and fairest duties of humanity.

It was in the elegant court of Augustus, which would have shrunk with apprehension from the roughness of Lucilius, and the sarcastic indignation of Juvenal, that Horace introduced a most refined and delicate species of satire, and attacked the follies of his age with gaiety and humour. But a more extensive and more frequent intercourse of nations, a more general prevalence of artificial manners, a greater variety of customs and peculiarities in the several states of Europe, and above all the additional elegancies of female

society, have afforded to the modern satirist an indisputable advantage both in variety of character and in refinement of humour. In the former, Boileau and Pope have greatly improved upon Horace; and in the latter, the moderns have more eminently distinguished themselves, by the invention of the mock-heroic, and the application of it to the foibles or vices of mankind, in the *Secchia Rapita*, the *Lutrin*, and the *Rape of the Lock*.

There may, however, be vices too enormous to be treated with courteousness, and too ridiculous to be exposed with severity. The glaring absurdities, the hypocritical cant, and the ludicrous fictions of the enemies of Charles the first, which for a long period most grossly perverted the judgment of the nation, could only be exhibited in their native deformity by that broad humour and burlesque, which distinguishes the *Hudibras* of Butler from the satirical productions of antiquity. What could not be achieved by the menace of authority, or the violence of arms, was speedily effected by this original and wonderful work: and the subverters of a government sunk under the pen of an individual. The refined and delicate censure of Horace, dullness may pass over in insensibility, or impudence overcome by effrontery: from the dark pictures and rigid morality of Juvenal, the gay may turn aside with disgust, or the vicious retire in sullenness: but

contempt and ridicule, which are uniformly excited by the poem of Butler, alarm the pride inherent in every breast, and sink us in the opinion of our own minds.

The same variation of national character, which has been already shown to conduce to the superiority of modern satire, has contributed likewise to the advancement of the comic muse. Unbounded liberty, envy of superior merit, instability of popular fame, and an unpardonable ingratitude for the most valuable services, mark the character of that people, in whose theatres Aristophanes was permitted and encouraged to expose the bravest and wisest of her warriors, poets, and philosophers, to the sport and ridicule of an ungenerous and malicious populace.

Happily for modern nations the licentious manners of the old comedy have been exchanged for a refinement and delicacy of sentiment, which never descends to those illiberal and personal representations of the drama, which may give pain and discouragement to virtue and to merit.

Of the elegance of style and chastity of sentiment, which appeared in the new comedy of Menander, we may form a decisive opinion from the pure and correct translations of Terence. But these recommendations are of little weight when contrasted with the comic productions of the French and English stage. The same advantages, which have already been adduced to support the autho-

rity of Pope, Boileau, and Butler, over Juvenal and Horace, have given to Shakspeare and Molière an equal pre-eminence over Terence and Menander. For in the conduct and intricacy of the fable, in the variety and strength of characters, in the propriety and force of situations, and in the ease, spirit, and characteristic expressiveness of dialogue, how do the poets of antiquity sink in the comparison! The delineation of a Thraso and a Chremes, of a Demea and a Mitio, has long been considered as too easy for the writer, and too uninteresting for the audience: but where are the characters of Greece and Rome that may be compared with a Miser, an Hypocrite, a Misanthrope, an Hypochondriac, and a Falstaff?

Similar to the advancement of modern literature in comedy, is its improvement likewise in tragedy. Amid the pride of conquest and the boast of superior abilities, Greece stigmatized all foreign states with the title of barbarians; and scorning to adopt, even in her writings, the manners of a people whom she despised, confined her delineations of characters in tragedy to her own citizens and countrymen. As the actions of her warriors were the daily objects of applause and veneration, and her poets were peculiarly desirous of conciliating the favour of their audience, they perpetually brought forward on the stage the popular heroes and statesmen, and con-

sequently produced in their tragedies a sameness of character, sentiment, manners, and actions.

The moderns on the other hand, from a more enlarged knowledge of mankind, have exhibited the human character in more various and more interesting points of view; have conducted their principal personages through all the variety and tumults of the passions; have brought forward the female sex actuated by their own powerful affections, and exerting an irresistible ascendancy over man; and have enriched the drama with representations of private life, and the interesting detail of domestic sorrows and misfortunes.

The modern reader departs with regret from the past exemplification of the superiority of his own poets, to examine the difference which subsists between ancient and modern nations in the higher productions of the lyric and heroic muse. The subjects of the Grecian lyrics were almost invariably founded upon the victories and triumphs of Olympic conquerors. The achievements were beheld with such general admiration, and the poet was placed so immediately upon the scene of action, that from the glowing sensations of the moment he was animated to the most splendid imagery, and the most elevated sentiment. National games and contests have long ceased: and the modern lyrist is weak and diffuse, when he attempts to celebrate the successes of wars too remote to strike by the splendour of

their actions, and too refined and general in their operations to admit the personal exertions of intrepidity and heroism. To supply this deficiency, our poets have opened a new source of description, by embodying the passions and calling them forth into existence and action. But present objects take stronger hold upon the mind than the sublimest subjects of refined speculation; and the writer is warmed into greater animation by commemorating actual events, than by delineating the fictitious exploits of imaginary beings. Thus the odes of Akenside, Dryden, and Collins, from the abstract nature of their subjects, though faithful and beautiful in the execution of them, are yet ineffectual in their attempt to awaken and interest our passions: but from the operation of a contrary principle, strength, spirit, and sublimity, are infused into the poems of Pindar, and fix the reader in astonishment and delight. Let us, however, except from this comparison the ode of Dryden to Cecilia, and the Bard of Gray: in the former, the English poet, like the ancient lyrist, applied his genius to the delineation of natural feelings: and, in the latter, the fire of the writer was kindled by its intimate connection with those times and characters, which Britons have ever contemplated with fondness and enthusiasm.

By contrasting the heroic productions of ancient and modern ages, we shall be furnished with a

striking instance of the influence of national character. The poems of Homer were written at a period when Greece was just emerging from a state of uncivilized but simple nature; and when a full liberty was allowed for the exercise of undisguised opinions and passions. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are consequently distinguished from all succeeding productions, by a faithful representation of simple manners, by a variety and a most minute discrimination of character, and by animation and accuracy in the description of places and actions. The epic work of the great Roman poet is marked by a pomp of description, a refinement and tenderness of sentiment, and a delineation of artificial characters and manners. such characteristics may naturally be expected in an author, who formed his composition for the court of Augustus, and the capital of the world. The revival of learning has ever been considered the most fortunate era in the annals of mankind: and we cannot but rejoice at an event, which has tended in its consequences to refine and polish the manners and taste of Europe, and has afforded to the ingenuous mind the purest gratification from the perusal of the chaste and animated productions of antiquity. Yet we must at the same time confess and lament its melancholy influence upon heroic poetry: by a perpetual recurrence to the Greek and Roman writers, by imitating their plans, and adopting their senti-

ments, Tasso, Camoens, and Voltaire, have exhibited in their compositions a weakness and frigidity, which will not bear to be contrasted with their bold and masterly originals. The earlier modern bards were educated in a different school: the dark and gloomy ideas of the north, the extravagancies of chivalry, the prodigies of romance, and the belief of the preternatural powers of enchantment, joined to a total ignorance of the rules of composition, produced that irregularity and wildness of plan, sentiment, and description, which are so eminently characteristic of Dante and Ariosto. These blemishes were heightened and completed by a preposterous intermixture of satiric and the ludicrous, with the serious and the sublime. Yet with all these imperfections they contain a boldness of thought, a strength of colouring, an exuberance of fancy, and frequent and delicate touches of nature. There is something in the view of wild and disjointed objects more powerful in its effects upon the mind, than of the most correct and finished scenery: upon the survey of a prospect, elegant by nature and improved by art, a silent delight spreads over our senses, and brightens our fancy; but amidst precipices, torrents, cataracts, and storms, we feel our imaginations expanded by magnificence, and exalted by sublimity.

Having considered the effects of national character upon the several departments of poetry,

we shall next point out those peculiarities, arising from the same cause, which form its general characteristics. The first and leading feature of the Grecian poetry, and which distinguishes it from all succeeding productions, is simplicity. The progress of civilization in Greece originated in a state of simple nature: hence, in her advances to refinement, she continually brought to the various objects of her contemplation that unaffected and natural cast of mind, which she had formed in the first periods of society, as the favourite impressions of childhood may be frequently traced in the pursuits of our manlier years. It was from this source that her poets infused into their writings that dignified simplicity which has challenged the admiration of all succeeding ages. This excellence indeed extended itself to all her productions of genius; and the works of the sculptor, architect, painter, and poet, reciprocally reflected this common beauty of their kindred professions.

Another excellence, which marks the poetry of Greece, consists in the energy which animates her compositions. Her advantages, indeed, were eminent and peculiar: her writers were exempt from those laborious exertions for the attainment of the necessities of life, which too frequently repress and weaken the efforts of modern genius: they did not, like the students of later ages, exhaust their mental powers upon a variety of languages, or blunt them by the abstruse investiga-

tions of science: while the praises and honours, which were publicly conferred at the games and in the theatres, served as continual incentives to invigorate their exertions. The higher poetry of France is cold and inanimate, the fire of Milton is kindled by the loftiness of his subject, that of Shakspeare breaks upon us in flashes, and that of Dante and Ariosto is interrupted and extravagant: but the Grecian bards cherished that uniform glow of imagination, which, like the invisible spirit of nature, pervades and animates all their works.

The simplicity and energy of the Greek poets received an additional lustre from their invariable attention to the arts of composition. Their exemption from the common employments of life, and from that variety and abstruseness of research, which embarrasses modern learning, furnished them with opportunities for the cultivation of this important branch of writing. Add to this, that their works when finished were publicly recited at their great national assemblies, where every individual, endowed with an elegant taste, was skilful to detect, and impartial to develop, the most latent blemishes and beauties; and where, while genius and industry were honoured and applauded, dullness and inaccuracy were censured and condemned. Happy would it have been if the same causes had operated upon modern literature, and had produced the same

effects; but the uniformity and completeness of design, the singular propriety in the disposition of the various parts, the compression of thought, the selection of imagery, the correctness and the accuracy which characterize the poetry of Greece, will ever continue to furnish us with the noblest subject for praise and imitation, but at the same time to humble us by the painful consciousness of modern inferiority.

But notwithstanding the simplicity, the energy, and the art, which so powerfully recommend the poetry of Greece, there still remains an excellence, which can only be attained by the silent progress of time and refinement. There generally appears in the view of undisguised nature, a coarseness and rusticity which obscure and debase her brighter scenes. In the same manner, Homer, Hesiod, and Theocritus, by a scrupulous adherence to the archetype of nature, have frequently disfigured their compositions by a meanness and vulgarity of sentiment and expression. But these blemishes gradually disappear in the accumulated improvements of repeated correction; as even the delicious vales of Italy assume a softer and more delicate air in the landscapes of Claude Lorrain. Sensible of the Grecian defects, and furnished with a most correct taste, supplied with specimens of the most perfect works of art, and constantly living amid triumphs and magnificence, the poets of the Augustan age exhibited a species

of composition decorated with the ornaments of studied embellishment, and elevated by a continued air of majesty. The dignified ideas of the people infused themselves into the imagination of the writer, and national poetry formed an illustrious counterpart to national manners.

But refinement is ever verging towards degeneracy. The people who have once exchanged their industrious frugality for luxury and pomp, will speedily sink into indolence and imbecility: and poetry, when to chaste and simple delineations of nature it has united ornament and splendour, will soon transgress the limits of a judicious and decent embellishment. The decline of Roman poetry immediately succeeded the era of its prosperity: the same causes which vitiated the taste of that people for public works, and even contaminated the purity of the senses and of the mind, communicated their contagion to the productions of the writer. Amid the general depravity, Lucan, Seneca, Claudian, and Statius, prostituted their taste and powers to false wit, unnatural sentiment, inflated style, and an uncontrolled licentiousness of description. It is melancholy to survey these labours of perverted genius: when, in the early stages of national literature, we behold the faculties of man struggling against ignorance and inexperience, and breaking forth at intervals into genuine strains of poetry, we glory in the dignity of human nature itself; but

to behold the same mental abilities, after many a noble effusion, wilfully deviating from the chastest models, and falling into meaner or turgidity, depresses the heart with the most humiliating and painful reflections.

In pursuing our inquiries through the poetical productions of later ages, the first peculiarity which strikes us, in the order of time, is the wildness and extravagance of the earlier modern bards. The general causes of this characteristic, and its particular effects upon heroic poetry, have been already noticed and illustrated. In tales and romances it forms a prominent and necessary feature, and imparts to them their chief beauty and originality. Lyric composition, even so late as the last century, was disgraced by all the excesses of a licentious and uncontrolled imagination. From the same spirit of irregularity, we have admitted scenes of humour amid the dignified representations of tragedy, and interrupted the solemnity of affliction and grief. Shakspeare, however, has been eminently indebted to it for the opportunity which it afforded him of exhibiting in all the variety of situations those bold and masterly characters, which the more exact and artificial dramatists of antiquity had neither spirit to conceive, nor courage to execute.

As deficiency of learning gave rise to irregularity, so excess of information has been productive of pedantry. From too intimate acquaintance

with the sciences, and the various subjects of controversial disquisition, the modern writer has often sacrificed propriety, simplicity, and nature, to the inelegant terms of art, or the sophistical cavils of disputation. The tenderness of Petrarch and the elegance of Tasso are frequently interrupted by abstruse disquisitions and technical details. In Cowley, the artist, the scholar, and the divine, supersede and obscure the poet. Nor could even Milton, with all his superiority of genius, suppress the unmanly pride of discovering in his compositions the extent and depth of his literary researches.

From the extravagance of romance, and the uncommon honours which were paid to the female character in the courts of the early modern princes, arose that spirit of imaginary affection, which preserved an influence over the poetry of Italy, France, and England, through many successive generations. The writer, who imagines himself to be inflamed with an ideal passion, must inevitably deviate from tenderness and truth, in delineating the emotions of his heart. Hence the writings of Petrarch and Tasso are weakened and disgraced by unnatural sentiment, metaphysical subtilty, puerile affection, and conceit. Donne, Jonson, Waller, and Cowley, have improved and perfected these insipid inventions of Italy. While Shakspeare and Milton have heightened the defect, by the addition of puns

and quibbles, and thus stand a melancholy testimony of genius degraded, and judgment perverted, by the contagious example of a vitiated age.

The last general characteristic of modern poetry is the frequent levity of its sentiments and expressions. The causes of this particularity are derived partly from the structure of our languages, and partly from a superior refinement of national manners. Its effects are varied both in their nature and in their merits: to the lighter productions of wit and humour it has imparted that delicacy of structure, and pleasantry of ridicule, which have rendered the writings of Molière, Boileau, and Pope, a perpetual source of delight and admiration. But when it is introduced into the higher production of the tragic, lyric, and epic muse, tameness and insipidity take the place of dignity and spirit. The annals of the serious poetry of France form one continued series of levity and languor. Italy has often united the light and the superficial to her own national conceits. England, indeed, from the more elevated nature of its language, for a long period maintained a masculine style of composition: but the refinements of Dryden and Pope have been eminently prejudicial in their tendency. Ever since the appearance of those writers, our poetry has, it must be confessed, become more soft, more harmonious, and more elegant: but in return for these acquisitions it has given up its

strength, its spirit, and its sublimity; and has adopted in their stead a mode of composition superficial, verbose, and glittering with unmanly ornaments.

From examining the effects of natural causes upon ancient and modern poetry, we are led to consider the influence of preternatural agencies. The mythology of Greece and Rome is formed upon the external appearances of nature, and the internal passions of man. The virtues and vices of the human mind were invested with a bodily form, and endowed with life and action by the creative pen of the poet. The trees, rivers, and mountains, were possessed with their guardian deities, whose attributes and employments were beautifully appropriated to the scenery over which they presided. While the greater divinities were formed upon the more exalted and royal personages of humanity: the grateful simplicity of a rude and superstitious age, in the extravagance of admiration, deified their first heroes and benefactors; and assigned to them in the regions of the dead, and through the palaces of heaven, the same illustrious employments which had signalized and ennobled their mortal character.

In opposition to this simple and interesting mythology, modern nations have brought forward various systems of religious machinery. The fairies and genii, which in the middle ages were introduced into our poetry by the admirers of

oriental tales and fictions^e, are as captivating in their attributes and actions, as they are original in their nature and design. The belief of witchcraft and necromancy, though degrading in its effects to the dignity of human nature, has furnished a most splendid and solemn ornament to modern poetry. Later ages have advanced still further, and peopled the air and elements with imaginary and spiritual inhabitants. The poets of Greece and Rome sometimes indulged themselves in delineating short and beautiful sketches of allegorical personages: but to clothe them with full and perfect forms, to appropriate to them their distinctive and complete characteristics, to involve them in the dangers and intricacies of human actions, and to hold them up to the abhorrence or admiration of mankind, was reserved for a later period, and for the peculiar honour of our own country in the writings of Sackville and Spenser.

But the system of Gothic mythology presents a more gloomy and tremendous appearance. The inhabitants of the north, living under a dark and stormy sky, amidst dreary and extensive woods and forests, had filled their imaginations with ideas of the most wild and terrific spectres. They assimilated their conceptions of superior beings to the countries in which they resided, and pro-

^e Harris's Philological Inquiries.

duced a system of religious machinery congenial with the horrors of their soil, and the savage barbarity of their manners. To this dreariness of situation was added the gross ignorance of the lower ranks of mankind, the unnatural extravagances of chivalry and romance, and the monstrous superstitions of a corrupted church. It was from these dark and dismal views of humanity, that the early modern bards infused into their poetry that extravagant and tremendous imagery, which overwhelms the mind with astonishment and awful delight. The mythology of the ancients is simply interesting and attractive, but frequently weak in its parts, and formed too closely upon the models of human characters: but the Gothic machinery, by its wild and original air, conveys us into scenes beyond the limits of mortality, and introduces us to personages not familiarized to the general perceptions of man. The former may be compared to the beautiful works of art that are scattered over the countries of classical antiquity, the latter resembles the castles of enchantment, not built by mortal hands, nor reducible to the rules of a human architect.

The last and most important aid which modern poetry has received from the machinery of superior agents, arises from the system of the Christian religion. It was from the inspired works of the sacred writers, that Milton elevated his imagination to a conception of those celestial scenes

and actions, which have fixed upon his poems the stamp of divinity. It was in them that he habituated himself to accompany the choirs of heaven, to conceive the productions of Omnipotence, to develop the machinations of infernal spirits, and to arm angelic hosts with the powers of the elements. This sublime and original imagery is as much superior to the most exalted flights of Greece and Rome, as the bodily representation of the Olympic Jupiter is exceeded by the spiritual conception of the Christian Jehovah.

Unhappily, however, for modern poetry, that variety of religious systems, which has so eminently contributed to its ornament, has been productive of a defect unknown to the mythology of ancient ages. The poets of Greece and Rome were possessed of only one system of this nature, and they have consequently preserved a faithful uniformity of machinery. By an acquaintance with numerous systems, the bards of modern times have frequently intermixed them injudiciously together, and thus produced a species of composition, discordant, unnatural, and unjustifiable. The admission of heathen gods into Gothic tales has destroyed the probability in many of the fictions of our earliest and best poets. But the introduction of fables and allegories amid the awful revelations of our holy religion, is vicious in the extreme: nor must our

reverence for the great names of Camoens and Tasso withhold us from the condemnation of a practice, which levels to human conceptions the dignity of the Supreme Being, and thus deprives piety of its fairest and fundamental support.

Such are the differences between ancient and modern poetry. The causes of these differences have been found to exist in the variations of languages, of national character, and of mythology. The languages of Greece and Rome favour the higher walks of poetry; those of Italy, France, and England, are adapted to the lighter productions of the muse. From the influence of national character upon the different departments of poetry, taken separately, many eminent advantages have resulted to the ancient world in almost every species of serious composition, to the moderns in all the works of wit and humour: from the influence of the same cause upon the body of poetry, taken collectively, the productions of Greece are marked by simplicity, by energy, and by art; those of Rome by majesty and ornament, and latterly by unnatural embellishment; and those of modern nations by irregularity, by pedantry, by conceit, and by a general levity of style. The mythology of ancient ages is simple, interesting, and uniform; that of modern countries, various in its system, more powerful in its effects upon the mind, but frequently intermixed and confused in its parts.

Comprehensive surveys of this nature are peculiarly calculated to suppress in us that unmanly spirit of superstitious veneration, with which we contemplate the poetical characters of remote antiquity. Convinced of the influence of human causes upon human labours, we shall no longer refer to the interposition of a supernatural agency the mere effusions of mortal intellect. We shall renounce the extravagant fictions which have deified the parentage of Homer, and ascribed to stars and planets the distribution and guidance of genius. We shall by this means at once support our own dignity of sentiment, and pay to the illustrious writer the honours and distinction, which, to the truly noble mind, are then most valuable, when founded upon the basis of truth and conviction.

We may hence, likewise, silence the malignant caviller, who would confine the praise of originality to Homer alone, and degrade all later poets to the servile rank of imitators. The spirit of poetic genius did not exhaust itself with that illustrious writer, nor with his numerous successors in Greece and Rome; but has displayed itself through succeeding ages in all its native vigour and enthusiasm. If ancient nations have transmitted to us the valuable patrimony of Greek and Roman excellence, we too shall deliver down to our descendants an inheritance equally precious and original. By the labour of our poets,

foreign regions and distant generations may be transported with delight, and overpowered with astonishment. And, if at any future period the learning of Europe shall decline, and the seat of literature be transferred to remote countries, in them may our writers be received with all the honour and respect of the classical character; and the works of Molière, Shakspeare, Dante, Ariosto, and Milton, be admitted to an equality with the animated effusions of Theocritus, Pindar, and Homer.

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1789.

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION
AND GOVERNMENT
ON NATIONAL CHARACTER.

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THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION AND GOVERNMENT ON NATIONAL CHARACTER.

WHILST inquiry is confined to the infancy of society, and the original state of empires, the web of national history, though woven by so many different artists, is of a texture uniformly similar. The rustic simplicity of nature, the rudeness of ignorance, and the horrors of undisciplined war, are the almost exclusive topics on which the historian of early ages expatiates. Amidst scenes such as these, so transient and so uniform, no traces of a permanent character are to be discerned, nor any shades of discrimination to be perceived: and as there can be little reason to suspect the agency of secondary causes, the philosopher refers this similarity to the genuine influence of nature. But when a people, once become formidable by conquest, or important by alliance, has ceased to fluctuate betwixt defeat and victory; when social intercourse has softened the hardy features of rugged nature; the con-

stituent members then begin to clothe their state in a peculiar and appropriate garb; and it is then that the philosophic inquirer is encouraged to analyze their specific character: and in his pursuit naturally speculates on the influence of moral and political causes, and calculates the combined effects of Education and Government.

The prejudiced advocate for physical causes may suspect the inquiry to be fallacious; but the opposite appearances which the same country has at different times assumed, of exaltation and depression in the scale of national importance, point at something beyond the over-ruling influence of soil and climate, and answer and refute the suggestion. We might appeal for the general demonstration of such an existing influence as we contend for, to the precise coincidence of the present state of some nations, where Education and Government have made little or no progress, with the earliest descriptions of them under similar circumstances. The roving Tartar and the plundering Arab are exact counterparts of their rude ancestors, as pourtrayed in the legendary tale and the more accurate relations of history. We might appeal to those extensive changes in national pursuits, in taste, and in manners, which have been introduced by political revolutions. The effects produced throughout Europe by the institution of the feudal system, were as sudden in their rise, as they were per-

manent in their duration. The wild, the generous, the martial spirit of chivalry tinctured every act and thought. To this we ascribe the frantic piety of the crusaders, who, from the warlike nature of their Government, and the ardent love of military fame which they necessarily imbibed from their Education, vainly thought that an expedition to the Holy Land would lead to glory, to happiness, and heaven. Hence too originated those extravagant schemes of knight-errantry, to the courteous principle of which we are indebted for the subsequent refinement of manners, and the most decorous part of modern gallantry : as, again, the formal challenge and the ideal point of honour of the feudal combatants have transmitted to us the Gothic custom of duelling. Nay, this adventurous spirit, insinuating itself further into the mind of the nation, infected learning with its contagion, and gave birth to those romantic effusions of fancy, which, together with the monstrous achievements they celebrated, the inimitable raillery of Cervantes happily brought into disgrace. But waving for the present any further appeal to the testimony of historical evidence, mere abstract reasoning exhibits in all the effulgence of truth the cause and the effect.

Government, considered as comprehending those laws and those principles, which regulate the conduct of the individual in his relative capa-

city to the State, being continually present to his mind, must invariably influence his habits of thinking and of acting. This effect becomes more apparent when we observe that reciprocal connection between Education and Government, and which it is both necessary and expedient to strengthen;—necessary, because by a contrary tendency they could not but counteract the influence of each other; and expedient, because when allied by kindred principles they mutually contribute to each other's improvement and stability. Thus the system of Education is proportionally more enlightened and liberal as the liberty of the subject is the basis and aim of the constitution; because, as is deplorably instanced in the inquisition of Spain^a, the interested caution of a despotic Government, vigilantly stops up every avenue to science. The diffusion of knowledge reflects back again similar assistance on the civil polity, and the progressive improvement of the Government is commensurate with the sober culture of the mind: just as the revival of learning in Europe was the joyful harbinger to religious and civil information. Thus closely connected by a link, the dissolution of which would weaken if not annihilate the efficacy of both; their powers thus united by their moving on in the

^a In Spain there is not, I believe, at this day, a single edited version of the whole Bible. Dr. Geddis, Prospectus, p. 108.

same line of direction, Education and Government act with a collective force, which is irresistably intense. The people, accustomed to consider them as the oracles of wisdom and virtue, and, insensibly, of simulating themselves to the objects of their veneration—duty becomes habitual, the genius of the constitution is transfused into the national mind, and in the character of the subjects we recognize the congenial spirit of the laws. Thus the pacific genius of Confucius's system, strengthened by the co-operation of an education which is truly patriarchal, whilst it formed a perpetual barrier to the turbulent machinations of the seditious, instilled into the Chinese such tameness and submission as rendered them an easy prey to the restless ambition of the Tartar. On the contrary, in the system of military discipline, which was in a manner incorporated into the government of Rome, we trace the origin of usurped authority, which doomed the feebler sex to an inglorious servitude; of that ungenerous cruelty, which insulted the feelings of a captive; and of that national barbarity, which substituted in the place of rational recreations the savage exhibitions of gladiatorial combat. This influence might be shown more at large by a reference to the singular habits of Judaism to the existence and continuance of which Education and Government alike contributed; or to the history of Sparta, where

Lycurgus^b delineated a plan of public Education and united it to the Government by legislative authority. In our own country too the tribute of more than willing obedience, which was paid to Elizabeth by her loyal subjects, has been ingeniously traced to the operation of the same causes^c. Doubtless therefore the prominent features of national character are formed by Education and Government; and a more minute examination will show the nature and extent of their influence.

Without entering upon the comparative advantages of abstract forms of Government, which have so long divided the sentiments of the speculative world, it may be sufficient to trace their influence on those nations in which they are respectively established. The gloomy lethargy which has generally been observed to oppress the subjects of an unlimited monarchy, which has damped the inquisitive ardour of curiosity, and thereby impeded the progress of refinement, forms a striking contrast with the invigorating principle of a free government, the prolific soil in which the active powers of man spontaneously vegetate and fructify. The basis of the great commercial republic of Carthage was freedom; nor from the very nature of man could the case

^b 'Αλλ' ἐγὼ ἐννοήσας ποτὲ, ὡς ἡ Σπάρτη, κ. τ. λ. Xen. de Lacedæmon. Republica.

^c Hurd's Dialogues, vol. ii. p. 28.

be otherwise ; for external commerce must soon languish and decay, where the fruits of it are not secured to the enterprising adventurer ; neither will ingenuity exert itself to invent the means of facilitating labour ; nor patient industry toil over the performance of a task for the precarious expectancy of rewards, which are at the disposal of a capricious despot. In conformity with this, an acute traveller remarks, that “It is impossible not to observe the difference betwixt the free and the dependent states of Germany^d ;” the busy authority of the one, and the torpid indolence of the other. The noble faculties of the soul too, and the finer feelings of the heart, must be alike strangers to an absolute sovereignty ; for by narrowing the sphere of action, it contracts the powers of the mind, and obstructs the advancement of political wisdom ; and by familiarizing scenes of rapacious cruelty, it alienates the sacred love of justice, and renders sympathetic feeling less acute.

But as national character, in its most extensive and complicated view, presents an exuberant and variegated scene, it may be proper to consider this influence on its component parts ; and the more so, because, amidst such a variety of objects as it comprehends, though some are in a conspicuous, others in an obscure situation, yet

^d Lady M. W. Montague’s Letters, vol. i. p. 12.

both the principal and subordinate figures are distinguished by the quality and tintured with the colour of Education and Government. A dependency on these great actuating springs is evident in the literature, in the morality, in the manners, and in the patriotism of a nation.

“The chief glory of every people,” says the writer of the English Dictionary^e, “arises from its authors.” It is within the compass of common observation to determine, what influence Government has upon the rise and progress of learning, and from what modification of it may reasonably be expected the most valuable accessions to the stock of national literature. Such is the delicate sensibility of the human mind, that it shrinks from the rude grasp of despotism, and only opens and expands itself under the genial influence of freedom^f. When at liberty to range at large in the boundless regions of science, it is characterized by a more daring spirit of inquiry, and a more successful aspiration after truth. But when awed by the terrors of inquisitorial persecution, it is incapable either of applying with the necessary severity of laborious attention to the abstruse productions of intellect, or of indulging in the lively pleasures of imagination. There is no period in the history of letters which memory looks back upon with more fondness and

^e Preface to his Dictionary.

^f Vide Longin. sect. xliv.

admiration, than the state of literature under Grecian freedom. Oratory was adorned with all the splendour of fancy and energy of reason, by the rival labours of Demosthenes and Æschines; of the improvements in the drama, the remains of the three tragedians are a monumental proof; the province of History was then first chalked out by the artless simplicity of Herodotus, and soon after brought nearer to perfection by the profound judgment of Thucydides. Politics were reduced to a science by Plato and by Aristotle, and the principles of morality so accurately developed, and its precepts so forcibly inculcated, as to admit of further elucidations only from inspiration itself. But Athens, which, while it could boast its independency, was the parent and the nurse of science, now degraded into the tributary province of an arbitrary monarchy, is a melancholy instance of the gross ignorance which the subjugation of a free state entails upon its wretched inhabitants. For that intellectual darkness, in which the Turkish nation is involved, we have no difficulty in referring to the baleful tendency of despotism, which, finding its best security in the ignorance of its subjects, is ever on the watch to retard the circulation of knowledge. Indeed, such a decline and fall of learning as this is, in a work attributed by many to the penetrating Tacitus^g, referred to a neglected Education;

^g Vide Dialog. de Oratore, cap. 28.

and perhaps this criminal inattention to the mind may further be considered as the consequence of a corrupt Government; perhaps the mental depravities under which nations groan, are resolvable into political defects, as their primary cause. Thus, in the slow and almost imperceptible progress of Indian civilization, we discover the retarding influence of the laws of Brama^h, to which his disciples blindly bowing, abstain from the most salutary reforms, with a religious dread of innovation impressed on them by the mandates of their prophet. Although, therefore, a well regulated Education might indeed operate as a partial and temporary remedy, yet upon the instauration of a free Government only are we to hope that Greece will again glow with the love of learning, will display its ancient freedom in the cause of science, and accelerate the consequent revival of letters.

But whatever remedial influence Education may have on national ignorance, its effects on the morality of a nation rise into view with a perspicuity which enforces conviction. Here indeed the moralist sometimes fears he sees interruptions of that action and reaction which was observed to take place betwixt Education and Government; a defect, if it really exist, which arose

^h Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Indes, par L'Abbé Raynal, vol. i. pp. 63, 64.

from a persuasion that the provisions of parental fondness would supersede the necessity of legislative interference. But though a legislature may not formally and professedly dictate any specific system of moral Education, yet it tacitly countenances all. For did we reason from the solitary influence of Education, did we forget that all enlightened governments do co-operate with it by inflicting penalties on the breach of moral duties, on the infractions of social rights, and in many cases on the grosser violations of established decorum, we should be plainly unable to account for its salutary operations on the individual and the national character. For, when in order to ascertain the effects of Education on national morality, we take a view of its comparative extent in different countries; when we contrast those nations that are abandoned to the untutored guidance of nature, or misled by the gross maxims of sensuality, with those amongst which are widely disseminated the precepts of pure Ethics, the dignified superiority of the latter, which appears at one glance depicted in the brightest colours of truth, bespeaks a generating power more vigorous and energetic, than unassisted Education possesses. With conscious pride we can compare the brutal lust of the rude savage, or of the deluded disciple of Mahomet, with the chaste passion of love in the refined European; the vices which degrade human nature to the

humiliating inferiority of mere animal existence, with the virtues which ennoble and exalt it. Thus powerfully does Education operate, when protected only by the general and incidental assistance of Government. That when associated by closer ties of union, it is capable of more extensive and efficacious operations, the celebrated polity of Sparta is an unequivocal proof. There Education and Government hand in hand, uniting their exertions, operated in a double ratio, and produced an effect fully proportioned to the cause. The pride of philosophy could not view with more poignant and imperious contempt the sensual gratifications of the voluptuary; nor the apathy of stoicism be more callous to the bitterness of grief and the anguish of pain, than the hardy native of Sparta.

The manners of a nation, considered as an aggregate of individuals, must, from the powerful influence of habit, be materially affected by Education. But so volatile are they, so subject to caprice and accident, that it is difficult to ascertain any fixed and determinate effect of Government upon them, further than the tincture which the political circumstances of a country give to the prevailing system of Education. In general it is true that the members of a republic, conscious of their independency and self-importance, adhere less scrupulously to the decent regularity of form: as again, the politeness which

sometimes characterizes the subjects of an arbitrary government, may be the result of that policy which introduces and encourages an exterior air of civility, as the mark of subordination and respect. Of this, the history of our continental neighbours furnishes an apposite illustration; who, bending under the yoke of despotism, and educated in the institutes of implicit obedience, were so far dazzled with the splendour, and soothed with the sounding titles which regal policy had established, as to glory in the unlimited power of their monarch, and insensibly transfer their obedience to him into the concerns of foreign and domestic intercourse ⁱ.

But it is not to extorted submission, or artificial loyalty, that a Government must look up for support; nothing but the voluntary exertions of freedom can secure the prosperity or the duration of a state. Rome, the mighty theatre on which such stupendous acts of patriotism were displayed, and such towering projects of ambition executed, now presents the dark and dreary prospect of fallen greatness. That Fortune ^k which Plutarch so beautifully describes as having wandered over the world, and at last fixed her eternal residence at Rome, has long since, in company with Liberty, forsaken her abode, and

ⁱ Moore's *Vices of Society*, etc.; Letters vi. and vii.

^k Plutarch. *de Fortun.* Roman. vol. vii. p. 261. ed. Reisk.

shown how little she was entitled to the vindication of such a moralist from the charge of inconsistency. Instead of that manly force and dignified elevation of sentiment, which was the distinguishing perfection of the lords of the world, we see a total extinction of the generous enthusiasm of free minds, a gloomy dejection, admirably represented in Lucretius's melancholy picture of superstition¹. In truth, in the creation and the growth of patriotism, the arm of Government is visibly effective. The victims of despotism, arrived as it were at the maximum of political misery, have every thing to hope from the generous pity of a conqueror, and will therefore feel little inclination to repel a foreign invader. But the very interest of a free people ensures their fidelity: accustomed to assist in the formation of laws, they consider them as the offspring of their own deliberations, and therefore protect them with parental vigilance; accustomed to participate in the advantages of society, they become grateful to a prince for the preservation of their rights, and assume against the violators of them a tone of patriotic indignation. Hence wherever a free government has prevailed, it has so deeply impressed on the national mind the invincible love of freedom, that as often as genuine liberty has erected her standard, thou-

¹ *Humana ante oculos fede quom vita jaceret*

In terris, oppressa gravi sub Religione.—*Lucret. lib. i. l. 63.*

sands have flocked to it. The straits of Thermopylæ will bear everlasting testimony to the patriotic tendency of the Spartan institutions ; and the plains of Marathon perpetuate the dastardly effects of slavery, and the animating principle of freedom.

Thus then does the influence of Education and Government, circulating through every vein of the political body, communicate to it its tone and temperament, and purify or vitiate it in proportion to the preponderance of good or ill. Not indeed that all the phenomena of national character are deducible from this source ; the glorious superiority of modern over ancient nations in some branches of practical morality, must not be considered as the effect of human institutions ; as the work of human industry ; or even as the result of the accumulated wisdom of ages. The perfect system of relative duties exhibited in the Christian dispensation, has been productive of substantial advantages, for which no provisions are to be found in the imperfect sketch of Pagan morality. Wherever it has been interwoven with Education and Government, it has infused into them vigour and energy ; it has refined the grosser propensities of our nature, it has improved barbarous ferocity into heroic courage, and enlarged into universal charity the narrow suggestions of selfishness. That the calamities of war are mitigated, that the insulting

conqueror no longer disgraces his triumphal procession with a brave but unfortunate captive, must be ascribed to the mild and forgiving temper of Christianity. For this vindictive and sanguinary spirit still rages in countries not softened by the Christian religion; the relentless Indian still exults in the scalp of a vanquished enemy, and the inveterate Mussalman in the hour of calm security, curses with rancorous hatred the unoffending Christian.

From this alliance of Education and Government, influenced by religion, we deduce the proud pre-eminence of Britain over every nation of the habitable globe. To this compound influence we ascribe that effervescence of national benevolence which, whether it be founded on the eternal principles of justice and the dictates of sound policy, or originate in the fond delusions of misguided pity, is surely so far laudable as it aims at rescuing from barbarity and advancing in social dignity, the hapless natives of Africa. To this we ascribe that disinterested philanthropy which laboured to stay the devastations of pestilence, and alleviate the miseries of the prison. To this we ascribe those enlarged habits of thinking, and that spirit of national independence, which, disdaining to employ those engines of base and cruel ingratitude, the Ostracism of Athens, or the Petalism of Syracuse, arraign suspected magistracy at the tribunal of justice. So that on the burn-

ing plains of Africa, in the dismal dungeons of foreign countries, and on the banks of the Ganges, the beneficial influence of the British constitution, and the impartial administration of British justice, are felt and acknowledged. Blessed, doubtless, is that nation where an enlightened freedom, governed and secured by law, upholds the fabric of the constitution; where salubrious streams, issuing from Education and Government, consecrated by Religion, mingle with each other and unite in diffusing fertility through every channel of the state. To such a government, aided by the happy union of religion and the salutary co-operation of learned seminaries, which public and private munificence has established, it is owing in this country, that the intellectual and moral faculties, the chief cause of national felicity, as well as the active powers of man, the chief cause of national opulence, are ripened into vigorous maturity; that agriculture flourishes; that commerce is extended wherever winds can blow; that public credit meets unbounded confidence, and the national honour universal reverence. Possessed of a constitution thus productive of glory and happiness, thus realizing the distant speculations of a great political philosopher^m, who thought such a form of government could be enjoyed only in imagination; is it not

^m Tacit. Annal. lib. iv. cap. 33.

our duty, whilst we contemplate with gratitude this triumph of civil wisdom over time and faction, to transmit the valuable patrimony unimpaired to posterity?—to prevent democratic frenzy from violating the majesty of legislation, and to exclaim in the peremptory language of the patriotic Bacon, “*Nolumus leges Angliæ mutare.*”

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POPULARITY.

THERE are two ways, in which human actions may be considered, when we attempt to form an estimate of their merit or demerit. In the one the reference is made entirely to the fundamental distinctions of right and wrong, and to the eternal nature of moral obligation. It is indeed only with reference to these, that human actions can, in the strict sense of the word, be said to have either merit or demerit. But, in another sense, we may be allowed to speak of their merit, as with reference only to the effects which they produce upon the general interests of society.

It is obvious, that the same distinction must obtain with respect to the principles which men adopt, and which operate as the causes and the motives of their actions. There is in strictness one only principle, which deserves the name, one only which the moralist can with truth acknowledge;—the love of virtue that is, and the desire of fulfilling the holy law of moral obligation. But we know, that it is not possible for men to

hold this one great principle perpetually in view. We know and feel, that in the very constitution of our nature there are provided for us many other motives, which may stimulate to exertion. Of this sort are all those wants and necessities, which belong simply to the individual, and still more strongly, those other wants and necessities which the state of civil society hath introduced. A principle, therefore, which has its reference to these alone, yet if its tendency should be to increase the general system of industry and virtue, to extend the views of man beyond himself, and to adapt his private interests to the general interests of society; such a principle may still be admitted as something laudable in its nature, and important in its effects.

The subject of the present essay is manifestly a principle of this latter kind; and it must be considered, therefore, on the grounds which have now been stated. But in such an examination, either of this or any other secondary motive, there is no desertion, however, of the real cause of rectitude and virtue. They may indeed appear, for the moment, to be less regarded than they ought, or to be purposely kept back from view. But, even so, the unconquerable force of truth will oblige us ultimately to revert to them; and the tribute of homage will be fully paid to their superior natures, when it shall appear, at length, that if secondary motives are to be consi-

dered on the ground of utility alone, yet even that utility must depend throughout on the degrees in which they coincide and co-operate with higher and more perfect obligations.

The love of popularity may undoubtedly be numbered among the first, and most powerful incentives of human actions. It is indeed a passion which grows up with our youth, and accompanies us through life. It imparts to every one new vigour and energy, a bolder spirit of enterprise, and more determined powers of perseverance. Without distinction of rank, or manners, or situation, it pervades the whole of man. It operates as strongly on savage and wandering tribes, in the rude beginning of society, as it does on the happier inhabitants of those countries which have attained the height of civilization and refinement—on the labourer and mechanic, as the statesman and the warrior. In all instances alike there is a determined circle in which it is allotted to every one to move;—and within that circle, every one is equally ambitious of being admired, and loved, and respected by his fellow-creatures. In all these qualities the love of popularity bears a near resemblance to the love of fame,—so much so, as often to be confounded with it; and therefore, as far as this resemblance reaches, it may claim its share to all those high encomiums, which the general voice of man hath so often lavished on that darling passion; enco-

miums which, although they have, sometimes, been carried too far by the charms of poetry and eloquence, have yet, in a less degree, not only been tolerated, but even sanctioned by moralists themselves. On so trite a subject there can be no necessity now to expatiate. Whatever the love of popularity possesses in common with the love of fame, we may be allowed to pass over in silence, as something which will at once present itself to the feelings and to the recollection of all. It must be our object, rather, after having thus assumed the general resemblance between the two, to mark with accuracy the particulars in which they differ; for however similar their natures may be, they are, in fact, very essentially distinguished from each other; and it is from the view of these particulars, that the real nature of popularity will best be understood.

It is the first of these distinctions, that the love of fame refers itself entirely to the respect and admiration of mankind.—It aims at excellence, and demands also that this excellence should be acknowledged and approved. But popularity implies not simply respect and admiration, but something of affection also towards the person who possesses it. It is another distinction, which is, in some degree, a consequence of the former, that popularity is connected throughout with the present times, with the persons with whom we live, and the circle in which we act.

Whereas, on the contrary, the love of fame will be often led to disregard all these, and to rest its hopes on the judgment of future ages, and of those to whom our lives and actions are only to be known by history or tradition. It is in these two distinctions that the real nature of popularity may best be traced; from them it derives on the one hand its claims of utility to others, and of value to its possessor;—from them also on the other hand are derived the hazards to which it is perpetually exposed, the precariousness of its nature, and the danger of its abuse.

They are little read in the history of man, who can suppose that he is at any time to be governed by his conviction only. We have naturally a reluctance to resign ourselves to any authority that is assumed over us. It might be thought, however, that this reluctance might easily be overcome, if we were but first convinced that he who seeks to direct us, had both the knowledge and the power to direct us to our good, the knowledge to understand our interests, and the power to provide for them, better than we ourselves can do. It might be thought, that in such a case our obedience would be yielded readily and cheerfully; and so perhaps it might be for a time. In the hour of particular danger, or particular emergency, when we are conscious of our entire inability to save and extricate ourselves, then, indeed, we are sufficiently ready to submit to the

direction of any who can undertake the task with a fair probability of success, and our obedience will then be secured by the strongest of all convictions, the conviction of our fears and apprehensions. But when these fears are once removed, the conviction ceases with them. Every one is again eager to think and act from his own suggestions, and again unwilling to give credit to another, as being wiser or better than himself. "Let but the storm pass over," said the Athenian statesman, "and the tree which has afforded shelter shall have its branches broken and defaced by the very traveller whom it hath protected."

In this, as in every other case, the exertions of man are heavy and languid, when affections are not interested in their behalf. Obedience so yielded is toilsome to give, and unpleasant to receive. He who receives it, indeed, instead of possessing something which aids and forwards his designs, seems rather as if he were dragging after him an unwilling weight, which, at every step, retards and impedes his progress. It can be no matter of surprise, therefore, nor ought it, in fact, to be made matter of censure, if he who seeks to avail himself of the obedience of others should consider it as a chief object to give himself a hold on their affections; it is on every account his interest to do so; he may do it, indeed, by improper means, but that is a question of a different

nature; at present, and speaking generally, it may fairly be asserted, that the desire of popularity cannot be censurable in itself; and he who seeks it is in reality only seeking to give himself possession of the best and readiest means, which may enable him to effect his purposes; the possession, as it were, of a charm which, with immediate and resistless influence, will fascinate the minds of every one in his favour, and attach them to him through every difficulty and danger.

There is no impropriety, let it be repeated, there is no impropriety in the wish to acquire and possess this power. Rather let it be said that such a desire is connected with, and is indeed a consequence of, those very principles which God hath placed within our breasts as the foundation of our social duties. When he formed us for society, and for intercourse with our fellow-creatures, he formed us also to find our happiness in their love and their affections. He hath given the love of popularity, therefore, not merely as an incitement to action, but as a cordial to cheer and gladden the path of life; and, considered in this view, it may be allowed to partake even of moral rectitude; for, doubtless, the great and holy principle of social benevolence, in whatever shape, or in whatever degree, it may be exemplified and exerted, may always be permitted to assume the name of virtue.

Let it be remembered also, that the desire of

popularity is often productive of much real happiness to the world at large. It becomes, as it were, a shield against both the arrogance and oppression of superiority. He who desires to please, and to secure to himself the affections of others, must certainly be careful, in appearance at least, neither to disgust by vanity, nor to irritate by injustice. By the influence, therefore, which such a desire will necessarily produce in the minds of those who feel it, it will contribute in a very great degree to the general happiness of mankind ; it will produce effects of a similar nature with those which will be produced by the principle of real benevolence, and it will supply, imperfectly indeed, but yet in some degree it will supply its place.

The case will be the same, precisely, in whatever scenes of life we may suppose this passion to operate, whether in the turbulent conflict of political parties, or in the peaceful circle of domestic life. In Rome, for instance, when the republic was divided into the two great parties, the success of either of which would have been equally fatal to the liberties of the state, considered in this point of view, there is no difference whatever in the ambition of those two men who were at the head of the contending parties. Neither of them would have been satisfied with less than the entire abasement of his adversary, and a decided pre-eminence for himself. But in Cæsar there existed

to a very strong degree, as much so, perhaps, as in any character of ancient or modern times, the love of popularity. Whatever distinction power or victory might afford; to him, however, the ultimate reward would have been to secure the goodwill and affections of his countrymen; without them, all to him would have been cold and comfortless. But Pompey had no such feeling. At the very time when he was the idol of Rome, he could scarcely bring himself to the acts of external condescension. It will, indeed, be difficult to point out any one act of real benignity, on his part, to the very people who had given him all. We well know the expression, "*Nostris miseriis Tu magnus es*" was caught and re-echoed in the theatre, while he was in the height of all his power. Had the event of war been favourable to him, no doubt can be entertained, but that his victory would have been marked with every excess of cruelty and severity. But when the fortunes of Cæsar prevailed, whatever were the real principles of his mind, for there is no reason to suppose, as some have done, that actual benevolence was any particular feature of his character, but however this might be, the desire which he had to possess the affection of his countrymen, was sufficient to render war less dreadful, and victory less calamitous. He pardoned, that he might be loved.

It is the same principle, exactly, and operating

in the same manner, which so often dictates to the higher orders of society those habits of condescension and respect, which conciliate to them the affections of their inferiors, and, in still lower orders of life, contributes to form that amiable character, which, in its own small circle, employs itself in little attentions, and trifling kindnesses, in reconciling the quarrels, or calming the jealousies, of those around them. All these several instances differ in their degree only, and not in their nature. There is no doubt but that benevolence may do all this;—and unquestionably it often does so; we argue only, that the case will often occur, where other parts of a character are sufficient to prove that nothing like real benevolence exists in it; and yet the love of popularity will be sufficient to produce, in appearance at least, the same effects, and so far even in reality, that the comforts and interests of society will be truly and effectually advanced by them.

Hitherto, it must be confessed, we have viewed the subject in its fairest colours. We are now compelled, on the other hand, to describe the disadvantages which belong to popularity, and which it derives even from those very distinctions, which contribute to its peculiar character.

Affection, we all know, is something very different from reason; and he who endeavours to secure to himself the affections of others, must endeavour first to please them. If this, there-

fore, be made the chief and primary object of our exertions, so that we are determined to effect it in any way, and by any means ; in such a case, the good and the harm which may ensue, will depend not so much on ourselves, as on those whom we are endeavouring to gratify. If they should fortunately be disposed to be pleased with what is really good and advantageous, then, undoubtedly, the desire of popularity will call forth the exertions of others to procure them those advantages. But mankind, as we know, are in general to be gratified not by the attainment of real good, but by the indulgences of their prejudices and passions ; and he, therefore, who seeks only to gratify them, will, for the most part, apply himself to these prejudices and passions. On this account, the love of popularity, if it be made the only principle, or without supposing it the only principle, if it be suffered to predominate in any very considerable degree, will become of all others the most fatal and pernicious.

Everything which has been said above, to show the value of popularity to its possessor, may now be urged with equal force to show the extent and magnitude of the evils it may produce : for the desire of acquiring it must necessarily increase in proportion with the value which it has. The greater this value and the stronger this desire, the more will men be inclined to use improper

means of acquiring it, rather than not to acquire it at all,

It would be very easy to trace the evils which may be produced, as we have before traced the advantages, to all the different gradations of the intercourse of life. But in many of them the evil is comparatively small; or at least there is one, in particular, which so far surpasses all the rest in magnitude, and which presents itself so naturally to our thoughts, that it may be sufficient to consider this alone, without descending to the minute exemplifications of others. I allude to that particular case, where popularity is made the foundation of political influence.

There is no failing by which the human heart is rendered more weak and unguarded than by pride, and there is no weapon by which it is more assailable than by flattery. There is, indeed, so great a love of praise implanted in our nature, as often to render us little attentive to the motives which may dictate it. Besides, were our attention greater than it usually is, such is the art with which flattery is commonly administered, that even then, perhaps, it would frequently be successful in its aim.

Now it is certain that what applies to man individually, will apply to individuals collectively. The same passions and weaknesses predominate in the nation which actuate the man, increased perhaps by the influence of example and the con-

tagion of manners. Precisely then by the same means, and by the same arts it may be acted upon and won. Hence it is that he who seeks popularity merely as a road to power, will often neglect the honourable course of virtue and danger for the shorter path of cunning and deception. He studies the modes of insinuation and address;—he assumes a pliancy of disposition, which no repulses can intimidate, and no contradictions can perplex;—he exercises himself on those topics which he knows are most pleasing and acceptable to the people, and he professes those opinions, in which he is certain the majority will coincide with him. But it may be observed, that the weaknesses of mankind increase in proportion as they meet with indulgence and encouragement: for obsequiousness of compliment, and the adulation of servility, sharpen only the appetite which they were intended to satiate. The people therefore on the other hand, when thus seduced and deceived, are led gradually to expect the same deference and submission from every one who sues to them for favour. They begin to look upon that as a right which originally was only a compliment, and expect the formal surrender of private judgment and the unblushing prostitution of principle as the regular sacrifice for their confidence and applause. Hence then a mean compliance with opinions, which may be false, and an implicit obedience to mandates,

which may be unjust, become too often the necessary instruments of success ;—and he who offers himself a candidate for general applause, who aims to possess himself of the affections of the people, will be ready for the most part, to follow every fluctuation of their caprice, and every suggestion of their jealousy.

Of this readiness on the part of a nation to be deceived, and of this encouragement held forth to those, who will so stoop to deceive, the natural consequence is a gradual degeneracy of public manners, and a certain decay of public virtue. Naturally, perhaps, but too willing to entertain notions of superiority, a people thus imbibe a spirit of inveterate conceit. They readily believe themselves possessed of those qualities and powers which their flatterers ascribe to them, and naturally conceive therefore that they are exempted from the common obligations either of decency or virtue. Thus by degrees vanity and injustice are systematized into principle, and sanctified, as it were, by usage. They pervade not only the dispositions, but the institutions also of a nation. Its administration of justice is disgraced by jealousy and prejudice, passions which never fail to harden the heart, at the same time that they pervert the understanding. Its civil concerns are the sport of chance and caprice, in which faction is continually provoking the turbulence of discord, and the competition of public

parasites is the only object of public attention and anxiety. In its intercourse with other nations its conduct is equally depraved. Inspired with a vain confidence in its own resources, and inflamed with an undistinguishing contempt for the rest of mankind, it consequently becomes irascible and insolent, always prepared to dictate with its authority, or interfere with its arms. Amid manners thus corrupted, it cannot be expected that public virtue should greatly thrive. In fact it is treated generally not only with neglect and indifference, but with disgust and contempt. The honest statesman and the hardy warrior are seldom versed in popular arts. They are unskilled in that science, of which the object is only to deceive and cajole, and of which the dexterity consists in artful harangues, and servile demeanour, in the flattery of a national prejudice, or the encouragement of a national weakness. In the contest therefore for popularity, they are not only outstripped by the flip-pant orator and clamorous demagogue, but are reproached most probably for a stern and unaccommodating disposition, for inflexibility of temper, and haughtiness of manners. Hence a stop is at once put to useful and spirited exertions. Flattery and insinuation are universally substituted in their stead ; and a nation, while on the one hand it is hastening to ruin, on the other precludes, by its own folly and corruption, any

attempt that might be made for its recovery and preservation.

From this alarming picture we will not descend to the description of minuter instances. The picture however, let it be observed, is not heightened nor exaggerated. Many and many a time may it be found drawn in these very colours in the faithful records of history;—and to ourselves the experience of the present hour hath fully verified the fact.

When we recollect in what colour we have before permitted ourselves to describe this same principle, that we scrupled not to represent it as connected with the finest feelings of our nature, as implanted in us by heaven for the best and wisest purposes, and as nearly allied even to virtue itself; the contrast will undoubtedly appear a striking one; but it will not follow that anything which was then said is now to be changed or retracted. We have only exemplified a common and well known truth, that a principle which, when it acts in due subordination, may be both amiable and useful, may, however, if it be permitted to act exclusively, or even with excess, be carried forward to such extent of mischief, as that it may seem almost to have altered its very nature. It is, however, of the first importance, that a people should know and understand the extent, to which those evils may be carried by the principle, which we are now considering;

that they may distrust those who act from it, and be on their guard against the snares which may be laid for them, or to speak more properly, the snares which they lay for themselves by the indulgence of their own passions. It would be of equal service to the interest of society, if those who are so eager in the pursuit of popularity, could be persuaded to repress that eagerness, by asking themselves the simple question, whether the possession of it be really of that value which they attribute to it. While it does subsist, it is undoubtedly of all other instruments the most effectual to obtain for them the accomplishment of all they wish. So much has been honestly allowed before: nor is it necessary, any more than in the former case, to retract what was then said, though it may now be necessary to take other circumstances into the account, and to form our estimate upon the general result.

The value of popularity, whatever it be, must in some degree depend upon its permanence; and, he who has accustomed himself to consider it in this point of view, will find abundant reason to diminish a little the ideas which he might otherwise have entertained of it. Popularity, indeed, carries with it in its very nature the seeds of its decay, and betrays at once the uncertainty and precariousness of its existence. Applying itself, as it does, to the affections of men, that is, in fact, to their passions and their prejudices, it

must rest also on them as its foundation. The love of fame, that at least which may properly be called so, which appeals to a more distant and severe tribunal, to the judgment of those future ages when passion and prejudice shall have all subsided, does not so repose itself on uncertain and variable foundations; before that tribunal it fears not to present the high and splendid actions which it boasts; it knows that, if they are such as really deserve the approbation of posterity, they will unquestionably command it, and that nothing will then interfere to bias or draw aside the dispassionate judgment which shall weigh their claims with equal balance. The love of fame, therefore, it must be confessed is a principle much more noble in itself, and much more likely to produce high and splendid actions, than the love of popularity, which depends alone on that, which of all things is the most fickle and inconstant, the caprice, that is, of the human mind; which is assailable equally by the freaks of folly, and the bitterness of malice; which is exposed alike to the petulance of ridicule, and the malignity of reproach, to attacks, which no caution can prevent, and enemies, whom no virtues can disarm.

For whether it be that mankind are more pleased in condemning than approving, or whether they regard severity of remark and intolerance of spirit, as more certain indications of sagacity and

virtue than candour and indulgence, or whether they conceive that every appearance of merit, of whatever kind it be, is a tacit reproof upon themselves, and tends either to rival or eclipse their own endowments, certain it is, there are few advantages of which among themselves they appear so jealous, as that of popular distinction. It is envied, even at the moment, when it is given. It is from this jealousy that we trace the various arts of detraction, the long catalogue of calumnies and falsehoods, exaggerations and distortions, which are as readily believed as they are industriously circulated. So many causes, indeed, concur to give a plausibility and success to artifices of this kind, that it is not always, that common reputation itself, much less popularity, which from its very eminence will always be more obnoxious, can escape. And if also to this propensity of mankind to wilful falsehood, and to the dangers of distinguished eminence, if we add also the facility of unintentional misrepresentation, the equivocal appearance which actions sometimes wear, and the numberless reports, which perhaps without meaning and without malice are in consequence circulated, we shall indeed confess that popularity even in this view has a formidable host of enemies to contend with, from whose attacks there can be but little chance or probability of its escaping.

But there is a still greater danger, which

threatens to abridge the continuance of popularity, and which may be traced to the same sources with the preceding. The expectations, which affection forms, will almost always be unreasonable. They will consequently be such as can seldom be fully answered. But if this should be the case, the possessor of popular favour, if he does not succeed, will be irretrievably ruined. As on the one hand we expect too much, so, on the other, if a disappointment ensues, our resentment is proportionably more violent. Even what might be termed improprieties only of behaviour, are sometimes sufficient to turn the current of popular opinion. They furnish opportunities which malice eagerly seizes on, and industriously perverts. They may be construed into proofs of culpable intentions, or beginnings of mischievous designs. Even in the eyes of the calm and unprejudiced part of mankind they are liable to misconception, and infallibly diminish something from general esteem. In fact, so light and inconstant is popular favour, on such slender materials it is formed, and by such inconsiderable occurrences may it be changed, that there is seldom a medium preserved. The transition from one extreme to the other is instantaneous. If applause be once checked, it is not uncommon to see it followed by disgrace, and if offence be unintentionally given, affections seemingly secured by the most unbounded confidence, are often suc-

ceeded by the most inveterate aversion. The popularity, which is gained by a long series of splendid services and glorious exertions, may be rapidly lost by one invidious action.

It is obvious, then, that if popularity may be thus easily lost, there can exist but little sincerity in the affections on which it is founded. We find in them, it must be confessed, the eagerness of enthusiasm, and the vehemence of transport; but it is an enthusiasm, and a transport, which are soon cooled, which reflection will allay, and difficulties will appal. We shall look in vain for the zeal of fidelity and the courage of attachment, virtues which, as they are founded on principle, increase and are strengthened by the very trials which they sustain. And how indeed can we expect it to be otherwise? For what, after all, are the affections of the world, and what is its applause? It is something which in most cases spreads itself, as it were, by contagion, which each man catches, he knows not how, and propagates he knows not wherefore—sometimes it is adopted from prejudice, and sometimes it arises from chance; and consequently, whether the object of it be deserving or not, whether it be justly or unjustly conferred, are points which have not even been once regarded. He therefore who congratulates himself on the possession of popular approbation, will find too late, that what he hath considered as the general voice in the world, has been in fact only

the voice of a very few, which has been echoed, loudly indeed, but unmeaningly, by others.

On reviewing the whole of what has been said, a few observations will naturally present themselves. We have seen, that, under the guidance of virtuous and honourable minds, popularity is capable of producing the most exalted good, and is in fact, for the purposes of society, one of the most useful principles that can actuate the human breast. We have seen, on the other hand, that when perverted to base and interested purposes, it becomes in an equal degree pernicious and destructive. He, therefore, who looks for the reward of his exertions in the approbation of mankind—and in some degree it is right and laudable to do so—let him endeavour at least, to exalt this principle beyond the mere desire of popularity to something less transient and less hazardous—let him seek to change it into the desire of real fame. Another set of motives will then present themselves to his breast; and he will possess and exert a firmness of mind and integrity of principle, which will bend to no momentary caprice and yield to no contagious delusion.

We have seen that the intrinsic value of popularity to its possessor is surely much less considerable than is generally imagined, and much below the expectations which may be formed of it. But it doth not follow, that any one will be justified, who shall seek to stifle entirely that

desire which heaven hath implanted in our breasts of the good opinion and affections of our fellow-creatures. Let him rather seek—he may do it with the confidence of virtue—let him rather seek to cherish the right and noble motive; to moderate it, indeed, and restrain it within its proper bounds, but to avail himself of it, as no mean incentive to splendid and great exertions. If it should even happen, that in the eagerness of his pursuit his judgment may have been sometimes misled, if he should be conscious at least that he has sometimes painted his darling object in colours too rich and glowing, and given to it a beauty and a permanence, which exist only in his own imagination; if he should feel, that in consequence of this deception he has made perhaps greater sacrifices than he would otherwise have done, and has engaged himself in trouble and perplexity, from which he might otherwise have been exempted; still, if his exertions, even under this deception, have been right and good, he is not yet wholly without consolation and reward. He will at least enjoy the admiration of great, and the esteem of good men; he will enjoy, what is equally beyond the reach of human applause, or human detraction, the satisfaction of conscious desert, of having served his country, as a citizen, and having fulfilled his duties, as a man.

WILLIAM ELIAS TAUNTON, B. A.

1793.

STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF A RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE.

SI GENUS HUMANUM ET MORTALIA TEMNITIS—

AT SPERATE DEOS MEMORES FANDI ATQUE NEFANDI.

VIRGIL. *ÆN.* I. 547.

MAN, as a moral agent, feels within himself a consciousness of the immutable distinction of right and wrong. This discriminating faculty, whether it be instinctive, or insensibly acquired with our other earliest habits, forms what is called the MORAL principle:—and doubtless, if implicit obedience were yielded to its dictates, it would alone be sufficient to regulate the conduct of mankind. But the many passions, which are naturally inclined to rebel against the sovereignty of reason, require the intervention of some powerful motive to control their spirit of resistance. It would not be enough to know the different qualities of actions, unless we could also foresee that their final consequences will be different. And, accordingly, together with the consciousness of right and wrong, there always arises in the mind a conviction that right, as such, will, sooner

or later, be productive of good, and wrong of evil; the great Author of nature having taught us to regard himself, eventually, as the rewarder of virtue and avenger of vice. It is this assurance of divine justice, which constitutes the RELIGIOUS principle. The moral principle, therefore, may be considered as theory, whilst the religious principle stimulates to practice; the one as an excellent law, the other as the authority which must sanction and enforce it.

The idea of an universal Providence constantly attentive to our actions, judging them without error or partiality by that eternal rule the transcript of which is, as it were, engraven on our own hearts, and also possessed of unbounded power to execute what it decrees, cannot but have the happiest influence on human manners. To those, who are already disposed to virtue, it never fails to add a most forcible incentive; whilst on the vicious it often serves as a restraint, which prevents them altogether from listening to slight temptations, and from yielding without a struggle to the greatest. Indeed, so strongly does a religious principle sometimes operate, that the most abandoned characters have been induced by it to perform actions which would do honour to the most exalted. Hence it is, that villany often stops short in its career, without any external allurement to seduce, or obstacle to impede it; and hence the most cruel tyrants have

abdicated their thrones, and retired to expiate a course of guilt by charity and repentance.

The excellent influence of a religious principle may also be remarked in its tendency to console the mind when harassed by afflictions. A man who is thoroughly convinced of the truths of religion, and whose general conduct is actuated by this belief, has little to fear from the caprice of fortune, or the enmity of the world. If his person or his property be attacked by the violence of lawless power, amidst all the horrors of want and the anguish of torture, he can smile at his oppressors malice, and confide in calm security on a future state of equitable retribution.—The virtuous sceptic, if exposed to similar sufferings, would derive little relief from the mere consciousness of his own innocence. Rather, indeed, this reflection would give additional poignancy to his distress, or, at least, would prompt him to hate mankind in general, for not rising to avenge his wrongs.

But the contrast will be more manifest, and more instructive, if we view them in the last periods of their existence.—The one looks forward to death as to a home where everlasting happiness and tranquillity await his arrival; to the other it seems like the passage to a perpetual exile; and every moment, as it flies, brings him nearer to that barrier, which he fancies, must separate himself and his enjoyments for ever.

The collateral benefits resulting from a religious principle are not less worthy of remark than these its express and immediate consequences.

As it uniformly presents to our contemplation the natural equality of all mankind, and the undistinguishing care with which they are regarded by their Creator, it of course, in a great degree, represses the pride of human grandeur, and instructs the affluent to show their gratitude for their own enjoyments by contributing to the relief of the distressed. Sentiments of general benevolence communicate serenity and delight to those who entertain them: a religious principle, therefore, is productive of the purest mental pleasure. Nor even with regard to less refined gratifications does it enjoin an excessive self-denial, but, on the contrary, bids us consider all austerity as useless, which does not strengthen a virtuous resolution, or check a propensity to vice; and every indulgence as allowable, unless it tends to corrupt the understanding, or deprave the heart.

But the necessity of a religious principle will appear more evident if we reflect on the inability of every other to compensate for its absence.

Honour, were its influence not limited to the higher classes of society, but even if it could operate on all, is yet of too vague and uncertain a nature to promote, in any considerable degree, the practice of virtue; since the mind, when left at liberty to determine its own obligations, would

soon accommodate duty to desire, and find arguments sufficiently specious to justify every indulgence. Indeed daily experience demonstrates, that honour, instead of enjoining strict attention to moral propriety, too often inculcates maxims the most repugnant to it.

A regard to the good opinion of the world must be equally defective, because there are many vices which cannot be publicly known, and others, which, if known, would be considered as venial. This motive, therefore, can restrain but few, when the temptation to guilt is great; and, besides, as fame depends on the sentence rather of a misjudging multitude, than of the wise and good, the eager pursuit of it will sometimes lead to actions intrinsically wrong. Hence it is, that the candidate for literary distinction is too often induced to maintain doctrines subversive both of moral and social order. But to the religious principle only are we indebted for the labours of those who employ their talents in a nobler cause, and enforce with the charms of eloquence the precepts of virtue and the dictates of truth.

The dread of legal punishment must be allowed to be more efficacious than a sense of honour, or a regard to fame. Yet the inability of human laws to reward, as well as to punish, alone proves their imperfection: for, without some hope of recompense to animate to virtuous exertion, the most complete penal code, were its penalties un-

avoidable, could have at best only a negative influence. But even this is materially diminished by the many chances of escaping detection, which the wisest legislature must always leave. Indeed, it is but natural, that a wretch groaning under the pressure of extreme necessity, and eager to obtain present relief, should view with little apprehension the danger of future suffering, which, however severe when actually endured, is often distant, and always uncertain. The prospect of divine justice, afforded by a religious principle, is very different. No human artifice can elude its search, no human foresight can predict its visitation—the very hour of guilt may also be the hour of vengeance.

Again we may remark, that the laws of society can attempt to restrain only from actual offences. They have no empire over the thoughts, nor can they in the smallest degree check the growth of those sentiments which afterwards generate the most atrocious crimes. They are sometimes, indeed, wholly unable to punish even the notorious commission of vice : since the severe prohibition of one irregularity would often give birth to others of a more dangerous nature. We may add, likewise, that society has introduced with itself new passions (such as pride, avarice, and ambition), which its own laws can never sufficiently control, and which, without some further check, would be subversive both of public and private happiness.

All these defects are obviated by the influence of a religious principle^a. But in no instance does it more remarkably co-operate with government, than by the strict adherence which it enjoins to truth. The sanctity of an oath is the grand bond of social life^b. By this the magistrate is forced to keep within his lawful prerogative, and the people to preserve their allegiance; on this, too, every judicial proceeding must necessarily depend: unless, therefore, some principle were sufficiently strong to guard it inviolate, our property and our lives would be at the mercy of all who are interested to invade them.

It is not an uninteresting speculation, to calculate the probable consequences of universal atheism. Fortunately, indeed, as long as reason is the property of man, such a calamity can never be apprehended. In vain do these presumptuous sceptics, misnamed philosophers, attempt to charm away, by the magic of metaphysical sophistry, the simple evidence of our senses, and the first suggestions of our understanding. The regular vicissitude of the seasons, and their beneficial effects on all around us, must, to every thinking mind, bear perpetual testimony of the existence and goodness of a God: whilst, on the other

^a Warburton's *Alliance between Church and State*, book i. chap. 3.

^b Blackstone's *Commentaries*, book iv. chap. 4.

hand, the more terrific phenomena of nature must warn us of his power to punish and avenge. But were it possible to banish from society every religious persuasion, the world would be one vast theatre of guilt. All, who are now restrained only by the dread of divine justice, would abandon themselves without control to every vicious inclination; and even those who are convinced that general virtue must be general happiness, would yet fancy their own individual interest best promoted by indulging in their favourite propensity.

History affords examples in confirmation of our argument. The natives of Madagascar acknowledge, indeed, the distinctions of good and evil, but are totally unactuated by the belief in an overruling providence^c. Hence they are represented as superstitious without religion, ignorant without simplicity, and voluptuous without refinement. The inhabitants of Paraguay, on the other hand, have no government but religion, and no laws but those which it inculcates^d. The consequences of such a system are in the highest degree salutary. Mild, courteous, and affectionate, they are strangers to those violent emotions of the heart, which too often disturb the tranquillity of more civilized nations.

^c Abbé Raynal's *Settlements in the Indies*, book iv.

^d *Ibid.* book viii.

In the intercourse of private life they preserve the most scrupulous integrity; whilst in public transactions with neighbouring states, no hope of national advantage can prompt them to the slightest violation of national faith.

Having thus endeavoured to prove the expediency of religion in general, for securing the observance of moral duties, and for promoting the happiness of mankind, we will now examine the particular systems of religion, which have been actually established. And in this comparative view, constantly regarding the proper influence of a religious principle as the criterion of our judgment, we shall, accordingly, appreciate the respective merits of paganism, judaism, mahometism, and Christianity.

1. By paganism we understand every religious system which is not in some degree authorized by divine revelation. Its origin must be attributed to the earliest exertions of the human mind. Man, indeed, in his most savage state is, perhaps, too completely occupied in labouring for his daily food to bestow any portion of his time on abstract speculation. But no sooner have the improvements of society given him leisure to exercise his intellectual powers, than he perceives the necessary existence of some hidden cause which animates and rules the world^e. From this sentiment

^e Robertson's History of America, vol. i. p. 379.

the transition to a belief in divine justice is easy: if there be a God, his nature must be perfect goodness; perfect himself, he must demand of his creatures perfection adequate to their faculties; virtue, therefore, must be the object of his favour, and vice of his abhorrence.

It is to be regretted that a creed thus simple, yet comprehensive, should ever have been enlarged, unless by divine revelation. But unfortunately, religious errors, contrary to the usual influence of refinement, increase and strengthen as civilization is extended. In some countries the credulity of the people has been engaged by an artful impostor to contribute to his own aggrandizement: thus the Lama among the Tartars, and the pretended descendant of the sun among the Natchez, exercise a despotism the most lasting and the most severe. Where superstition is not thus employed to favour the designs of individuals, its influence is often still more pernicious. It then usually assumes the form of polytheism, and polytheism is soon succeeded by idolatry.

In a rude nation this system must always be productive of the most horrible effects. The trembling suppliant at the altar of his idol, thinks the efficacy of every sacrifice proportioned to its value; and that, as no life is so precious as that of man, so no victim is equally acceptable to heaven. This persuasion has too often deadened

the sympathy, and annihilated the natural affection of mankind; has armed the conqueror against his unresisting captive, and bathed the parent's hand in the blood of his offspring.

In a nation refined and softened by philosophy, similar excesses are not to be apprehended. Yet even here the influence of idolatry is scarcely less dangerous, though its consequences are different. In this case, the popular form of worship is too glaringly frivolous to be long respected by any but the most ignorant. Unfortunately, however, it is less difficult to detect falsehood than to discover truth. Hence it too often happens, that infidelity succeeds to superstition, and that the removal of one evil only leads to the establishment of a greater.

Other countries (where neither the enthusiasm of the people has violated nature by human sacrifice, nor the absurdities of the public worship provoked a contempt of religion in general) have not however been wholly free from the evils incident to paganism. A partial knowledge of religious truths has sometimes occasioned almost as fatal consequences as a total ignorance of them^f. The misguided Japanese believes in the immortality of the soul, but regards death only as a change of temporal for eternal existence. He fancies that his present enjoyments will continue

^f Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, vol. ii. p. 162.

beyond the grave, and that the object of affection, which disease or accident may have wrested from his embraces, will be restored to him hereafter. Can we wonder at his impatience to accelerate this desired reunion? or that he should eagerly terminate a life which seems only to retard his felicity?

2. Judaism more completely formed the national character than any other system of religious faith. Indeed, as all the institutions of the Jews were founded on the authority of their religion, in considering the influence of the latter, we include that of government and education. These forces united cannot but have a most powerful effect. In the present instance each tended to promote the cause of virtue: and this people, while they strictly adhered to the precepts of Moses, were as much distinguished from the world at large by the excellence of their manners, as by the peculiarity of their laws.

But their religion being held by an exclusive privilege, was therefore so far imperfect, as it tended to repress the feelings of general philanthropy. The divine preference so flattered them with a sense of their own superiority, that they regarded the gentile world with hatred and contempt. Their national pride was the strongest obstacle to the propagation of Christianity among them, and they were easily persuaded to oppose a religion, which was repugnant to their most

favoured prejudice^g. We cannot wonder that the same sentiment should have disabled them from profiting by the inventions of their neighbours, and from contributing their own discoveries to the stock of general knowledge. The very constitution of their laws seems, indeed, to have been averse to science; since Moses, by extending them to all the occupations of public and domestic life, necessarily checked every impulse to improvement.

3. In considering the influence of mahometism on the countries in which it has been established, we are immediately struck with the universal prevalence of arbitrary power^h. Were this observable only in a few nations, under similar circumstances of soil and climate, we might perhaps refer it to natural or accidental causes. But since people in various situations, and of contrary habits, who have embraced the faith of Mahomet, are all equally the slaves of despotism; since every brave and independent nation, which has enlisted under its banner, has at the same time sacrificed its rights, and submitted to the dominion of a tyrant, we cannot but infer, that the very principles of his religion are subversive of freedom.

A no less distinguishing characteristic of mus-

^g Bossuet's Universal History.

^h Professor White's Bampton Lectures, ix. p. 354.

salmen is their universal ignorance¹. The doctrine of fate, taught as it is in the most unqualified manner, has almost extinguished that ardent love of improvement which seems natural to the human mind: and the followers of Mahomet are so thoroughly convinced of the unalterable decrees of Providence, and the inutility of their own exertions, that they forbear to resist even the progress of disease, and the infection of the plague^k. Hence the Turks, the most powerful and most enlightened among them, are infinitely the most uncivilized of the Europeans. So deficient is their knowledge of the polite and even useful arts, that the highest offices in the state have sometimes been committed to men who could neither write nor read^l. Indeed, the nature of their government would be of itself sufficient to fetter the understanding, without any restraint from religion. But this stronger principle has rivetted the chains which despotism would otherwise have imposed: it is the fatal talisman which must for ever hold the followers of Mahomet in a state of hopeless barbarity.

A religion thus establishing, by its own authority, the greatest evils mankind can dread, servitude and ignorance, will not be expected to

¹ Professor White's Bampton Lectures, ix. p. 360.

^k Ibid. note, p. 71.

^l Memoirs of Baron de Tott, part iii. p. 195.

inculcate a pure system of moral obligations. Accordingly, the grand precept of the Koran is hostility to unbelievers^m. War, the successful instrument of conversion in the lifetime of Mahomet, is still enjoined to his descendants. But that martial enthusiasm, which once ensured victory to the faithful in every enterprise, has long been succeeded by the most ungenerous malice; and the only proof which the mussalman now displays of zeal for his religion, is by accumulating insult on his Christian or Jewish captive.

The illiberal spirit of mahometism may be further remarked in the degradation of the feebler sex. The eastern women, sunk from their native dignity to a state of servitude, have no longer that amiable sensibility, which in other countries can solace the cares of life, and heighten its enjoyments. The same cause may have occasioned that coarseness of behaviour and austerity of disposition so observable in the men; unless we would rather impute them to the prohibition of those innocent convivial pleasuresⁿ, which afford at once a motive and an opportunity for friendly intercourse.

But the evil tendency of the Koran is nowhere more conspicuous than in its open allowance of

^m Al Koran, chap. ii. ver. 8. and 47.

ⁿ Ibid. chap. ii. and v.

revenge°. A permission to gratify without reserve the most impetuous passion of the heart, has in Turkey produced consequences which the foreigner regards with abhorrence: assassination is there regarded as a deed of heroism, and, after a short interval of concealment, the murderer may publicly exult in his successful crime^p.

It must be confessed, however, that the precepts of Mahomet have enjoined some duties which materially promote the happiness of social life. Charity to the distressed, hospitality to the stranger, and exact justice to all^q, are inculcated by him in the strongest terms. But these virtues form only a small part of the duties which ought to be enforced, and are counterbalanced by too many imperfections for us to doubt the pernicious tendency of this religion in general.

Could a doubt once arise, an examination of the joys promised by the Koran in a future existence, would immediately dispel it. The mahometan paradise is gross and sensual. The eternal rewards appointed for virtue are in themselves vicious, nor is there a single enjoyment predicted, which good men of a different faith would not contemplate with disgust. The man-

° Al Koran, chap. xxii.

^p De Tott, part i. p. 215.

^q White's Bampton Lectures, ix. p. 410.

ners of the people have been too deeply tinged by this defect in their religion; and hence it has followed, that lust, polygamy, and even vices which reason disclaims and nature abhors, are prevalent among the orientals.

4. Such are the consequences of mahometism. In examining next the effects which Christianity has produced, it will be proper to follow the same series, and to trace separately its influence on government, learning, and manners.

It is the peculiar excellence of this religion, that, without prescribing any one political system, it has ordained obedience to all. Perhaps, indeed, the gospel may be considered as in some degree averse to a republic, because the general tenor of its precepts condemns that turbulent and licentious spirit which seems almost inseparable from a popular form of government. On the other hand, it cannot be said to favour oppressive monarchy, because oppression of any sort, being contrary to its doctrines, must weaken the strongest claim on the obedience of the people, a sense of religious obligation. But a government which is neither committed to the fickleness of a multitude, nor the despotism of an individual, may look to Christianity for its surest support; and the magistrate will always find it his real interest to befriend a religion, which repays his assistance with more than reciprocal protection.

The influence of the gospel on the understand-

ing of its converts is uniformly propitious. The sublime notions, which it inspires, of our nature and destiny^r, have so enlarged the powers of the mind, that countries, which were once buried in the deepest ignorance, have since the introduction of Christianity, been advanced to the highest summit of refinement. Indeed, exclusively of this consideration, the peaceable tendency of its doctrines, and the mild system of government, which it invariably promotes, must always ensure success to the cultivation of letters.

But the advantages resulting from it to science are more manifest and more important. The philosophers of antiquity were chiefly employed in speculating on the nature of the gods, and in framing minute distinctions of the principles of good and evil. Such subjects must doubtless have seemed to them infinitely more important than the revolutions of the stars, and the theory of the earth; and in consequence we may remark, that their acquisitions in physical knowledge were inconsiderable. But to Christians, revelation has previously explained the existence and attributes of a Supreme Being, and fixed a standard of moral truth: the mind, therefore, is left at liberty to search without interruption into the secrets of nature, and to penetrate to those hidden springs which give motion to the universe. These in-

^r White's Bampton Lectures, ix. p. 377.

quiries have been as prosperous as the circumstances attending them have been favourable; and each successive generation has uniformly profited by the experience, and extended the discoveries, of its predecessors.

The influence of Christianity on manners is more beneficial than on government or on the arts. Contrary to the natural effect of judaism, and to the express doctrine of Mahomet, it inspires its votaries with sentiments of universal benevolence; and teaches them, that no opposition of religious faith, or political interests, can justify a neglect of that connection which unites all the world as one family, and all mankind as brethren. This precept has, as might be expected, produced the happiest effects. In our own country it has given birth to those munificent institutions which afford an asylum to the indigent and the infirm; it has induced our legislature to protect from future violence the oppressed natives of Africa, and to relieve from famine the exiled royalists of France. Indeed, every people, who profess the Christian faith, are characterized by a benevolent disposition. Hence war, though from the weakness of human nature it cannot be wholly repressed, has, since the establishment of this religion, been divested of its greatest horrors: private property is now regarded by the conqueror as sacred, and every comfort is eagerly admi-

nistered which can alleviate the distresses of captivity.

To pass from the influence of Christianity on national character to its effects on individuals, we may remark its peculiar success in restraining the sensual propensities of mankind. This, perhaps, is not to be wholly attributed to those precepts in which the indulgence of such passions is positively condemned; but it may in a great measure have arisen from that refinement of sentiment, which must always follow the due contemplation of a spiritual paradise. Taught to consider perfect happiness as the result only of perfect purity, the follower of the gospel will be eager even in this world to attain as high a degree of excellence as his own infirmity will permit; and will, therefore, substitute for those pleasures, in which the brutes themselves may partake, the enjoyments of reason and of virtue.

But the grand injunction of the gospel, "to treat others as we would ourselves be treated," whilst it includes the whole of our social duties, has in every station of life the most salutary influence. It instructs the prince to consult only the public welfare, and to consider himself as the guardian of his people's rights, not the arbiter of their fortunes: he is, therefore, seldom inclined to exercise his power oppressively, even when he can do so without danger; and it is an undeniable

truth, that the most severe of Christian tyrants is mild in comparison with the emperors of ancient Rome, or the sultans of modern Turkey. In the middle ranks of life this precept uniformly promotes candour, and mutual confidence between equals, and gentleness towards dependants; whilst in the lower orders of society it ensures a spirit of submission to the laws, and of acquiescence in the just claims of their superiors.

Upon the whole, therefore, from this inquiry it has appeared, that a religious principle only can completely regulate our moral conduct, and secure our social welfare: that paganism, originating in the reason, but corrupted by the frailty of human nature, is, for the most part, productive of absurdity or vice; that the Mosaic institutions, though well adapted to preserve purity of manners among the Jews themselves, excluded them, however, from a benevolent intercourse with the world at large; that the precepts of Mahomet are destructive alike of the comfort and the virtue of his followers; but that Christianity, whilst it inculcates the most perfect system of moral duties, is at the same time the surest source of national and domestic happiness.

Thus pure in its doctrines, and salutary in its influence, is the religion which we profess. May it be cherished with gratitude equal to its excellence! and as often as the pride of philosophy

shall labour to subvert our confidence in its truth, or the mad spirit of innovation to destroy our respect for its establishment, may all such efforts be repelled with virtuous enthusiasm; with the zeal of men faithful to themselves, their country, and their God!

HENRY PHILLPOTTS, A. B.

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